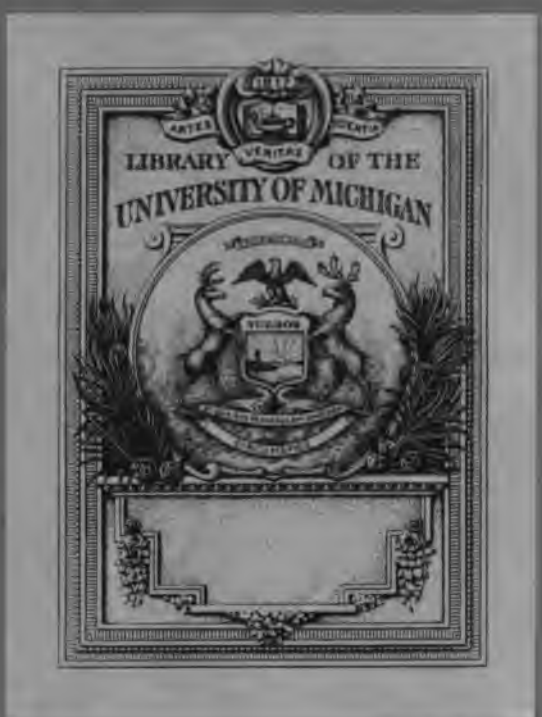
ON THE TRAIL OF STEVENSON

BY

CLAYTON HAMILTON

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY

WALTER HALE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ON THE TRAIL OF STEVENSON

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EDINBURGH CASTLE—FROM THE GRASSMARKET

"It was here, of course, that St. Ives was confined as a prisoner from France; and the reader of the novel will probably turn dizzy as he gazes down the precipice where the hero dangled himself to freedom by a rope."—Page 17.

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BY

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THE PICTURES FROM DRAWINGS BY

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TO

H. Ginnel Leberthon

"IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF THEIR YOUTH
AND THEIR ALREADY OLD
AFFECTION"

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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EDINBURGH

ON THE TRAIL OF STEVENSON

CHAPTER ONE

EDINBURGH

I

PILGRIMAGES to the homes and haunts of famous authors are in many cases merely sentimental journeys. There is a type of writer whose works are utterly uninfluenced by the places where they were conceived and written. Of this type, Edgar Allan Poe may be cited as an extreme example. There is no passage in any of his masterpieces to remind us that he was born in Boston, lived in Richmond, Philadelphia, and New York, and died in Baltimore. Sentimental tourists may visit his cottage in Fordham or lay flowers on his grave; but in neither of these places will they find the slightest clue to the appreciation of his genius.

The number of American visitors to Stratford-on-Avon is at present computed to be more than twenty-five thousand a year; but these pilgrims are no nearer to Shakespeare in his birthplace than they were in New York or New Haven, in Kankakee or Kokomo. There is no mention in the works of Shakespeare of the house in Henley Street, nor of Ann Hathaway's cottage at Shottery, nor of the Grammar School, nor of the lovely little church beside the Avon which became the

ultimate repository of his bones. His plays, indeed, give evidence of an early and abiding love of rural Warwickshire, and this trait might be substantiated by an aimless stroll across country in any chance direction; but such a stroll is seldom undertaken by the sentimental tourists, who seem to imagine that *As You Like It* was derived from recollections of the house in Henley Street.

Such instances as this might almost lead us to decide that literary pilgrimages are merely sentimental, and have no value for the student or the critic—were it not for the existence of another type of writer, whose slightest work takes colour from the features of his immediate environment. The student of literature can gain nothing from a visit to the birthplace of Robert Southey in Bristol; but he can gain a great deal from a visit to the primitive cottage where Robert Burns was born. This latter visit is informing, and is not merely sentimental; for the very place is eloquent in explanation of the poet's qualities. The genius of some writers is rooted in the soil; and, properly to understand the blossom and the fruit, we must explore the ground where it was planted.

Of this type an extreme example is Robert Louis Stevenson. Both by temperament and by the circumstances of his life, he was a wanderer; and wanderers rarely take root in the soil that they so lightly traverse; but nearly every place that Stevenson visited for more than a fortnight made a keen impression on his mind and exerted an abiding and recurrent influence upon his work. After Stevenson had lived in any place, he made it live in literature; after he had enjoyed himself in any place, he made that place a focus of enjoyment for future generations.

EDINBURGH—THE STEVENSON HOME AT 17 HERIOT ROW

"Many of those visual impressions of a city that recur continually in his writings are records of what he saw in very early years when he looked forth, day and night, from the windows of this house."—Page 12.

For this reason, a pilgrimage to the homes and haunts of Robert Louis Stevenson is something more than a merely sentimental journey. Such a pilgrimage affords the student or the critic innumerable clues toward a proper understanding of the man and a judicious estimation of his work. Stevenson, with his quick eye for localities, his keen enjoyment and his vivid recollection of them, may be said to have absorbed into himself the many places where he pitched his tent, until he was lured forth finally to the ultimate islands of the far Pacific; and a visit to the most important of these places will lead us to a nearer intimacy with the man and a better-founded understanding of his writings.

II

Stevenson is one of the most personal of writers. It is not merely in those essays wherein he deals directly with his memories of people and of places that he is autobiographic; he is scarcely less so in those other essays wherein the subject is ostensibly external to himself. To cite a single instance—he evolves his most engaging theory of narrative, not from a comparative study of great novels and romances, but from a personal recollection of the absurd and cryptic sport of lantern-bearing with which he had lighted a summer season of his boyhood in North Berwick. He is one of the very few authentic poets whose verses are exclusively occasional; for, except the inconsiderable ballads, practically all his poems commemorate occurrences in his own career. The technical method of his narrative is, indeed, rigidly objective; but the mood is insinuatingly subjective none the less; and *Treasure Island* tells us nearly as much about the

author's boyhood as any of his essays. Other novelists had studied pirates, but Stevenson had been one; and, instead of retelling "all the old romance exactly in the ancient way," he instilled into it the tang of recollection.

It has frequently been said that Stevenson is an egoist; and the appellative is true or not, according to the tone of voice in which it is delivered. If the word be understood clear-mindedly, in its philosophical significance, it precisely defines the process of his mind. The essence of Stevenson's egoism is not difficult to discern. In his mental attitude toward his own life, he departed in two important ways from the habit of the average man: for, first of all, he enjoyed his life, and, second, he remembered it. The faculty of self-remembrance is rare; and Stevenson was stating a significant truth when he wrote to Mr. Henry James, "I am one of the few people in the world who do not forget their own lives"; but the faculty of self-enjoyment is even rarer. Most people think that they enjoy themselves, whereas all that they really enjoy is the pleasant things that happen to them; but in one of his most recently published letters (written at the age of twenty-three) Stevenson speaks, with the authority of one who knows, of "that *belle humeur* and spirit of adventure that makes a pleasure out of what is unpleasant."

Stevenson, despite a widespread popular impression to the contrary, was not, by temperament, a happy man. Three years before his death he wrote to Sir Sidney Colvin, "I was only happy once; that was at Hyères." His most characteristic mood was a commingling of gaiety and melancholy; and the happiness which is trumpeted in his essays is a matter not of temperament but of philosophical conviction.

But he was, by temperament, unfalteringly self-enjoying. He enjoyed not only his pleasures, but his difficulties also, and welcomed with undissuaded interest whatever experience swam into his ken. A self-enjoying nature such as this takes possession of its own experience with a completeness that is without precedent in the habit of the average man. For this reason, Stevenson's life, in a quite unusual sense, belongs to him. No incident, in all his drift of years, was wasted. Nothing that happened to him seemed trivial; and this is the basis of his literary power to make ordinary, common things shine forth with a glory that seems strange and new.

Furthermore, Stevenson never lost the tang and glow of any particular experience, because of his peculiar genius for recollecting his own thoughts and recalling his own emotions. Most of us, as we advance through life, burn the bridges behind us; but he kept his backward communications forever free and open. In the preface to *Memories and Portraits*, he speaks of his own young face as a face of the dead; but, in truth, it was never so for him. He could always scramble down the ladder of his ages and reënjoy a past experience without any disenchanting intrusion of his later and maturer consciousness.

A man with this extraordinary gift of self-enjoyment rendered permanent by self-remembrance [for there, in a phrase, is the essence of Stevenson's egoism] scarcely needs, if the drift of his experience be full and varied, to look outside the circle of himself to gather knowledge of the world. He will study human nature by watching himself, rather than by watching other people. "If I were that sort of person, in

that sort of situation, how should I feel and act?"—that is Stevenson's criterion of truth in fiction. And his evidence of truth in his expository essays seems to be, "This I have felt, and now remember: therefore it is life"—a syllogism which reminds us of Descartes. To sum up in a single sentence, Stevenson derives his sense of life in general by inference from his own sensations of living in particular.

Since Stevenson's art is prevailingly memorial, we must, in order to appreciate it fully, trace it back to its origin in his personal experience. If we are properly to appraise the work, we cannot know too much about the man. With most artists, a distinction may be drawn between their inner and their outer lives, and the real experience they conquer while following the path of gold is very different from that actual experience which drifts to them daily in the world of men; but with Stevenson the two lives—the outer and the inner, the actual and the real—are fused by his memorial imagination into one. This is undeniably the reason why his actual life seems to answer so exactly to his character, and appears—as he himself would probably have put it—as fitting and as true as a romance. His own career is, indeed, the most stirring and significant narrative that he has left behind him; and, in a very real sense, he is himself his greatest character.

The procedure of Stevenson's thought was rarely intellectual. He derived his conclusions from emotions; and these emotions were induced from the memory of past sensations. The initial basis of his equipment was, therefore, his apparatus for sensation; and this apparatus was extraordinarily keen. He had quick eyes, quick ears, and was habituated to

respond with energy to every stimulation from without. Thus, places which might have excited no reaction from a less sensitive observer produced upon his mind an indelible impression—an impression which, sublimated by the artistry of memory, he would later put to service in his literary work. ' To appreciate his work completely, it is therefore necessary to investigate the various localities which contributed successively to that storehouse of sensations from which he ultimately abstracted the materials of his finished art. For this reason, a pilgrimage on the trail of Stevenson must be regarded, not merely as a sentimental journey, but also as an adventure in literary criticism.

III

It has often been said that every child should choose his parents wisely; and it might also be averred that every child should choose a proper birthplace. This, at least, was done by Robert Louis Stevenson. The "gray metropolis of the winds," which is lauded in so many of his letters and celebrated in so many of his essays, seems, even to most aliens, the supremely fascinating city of the modern world. No other capital in Europe can rival its threefold combination of beauty of natural locality, impressiveness of monumental grandeur, and richness of romantic atmosphere. It is fortunate indeed for literature that a writer whose entire work was doomed to bear the impress of whatever sensations he might receive from his environment in childhood should have been born and reared in "the quaint gray-castled city where the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly and beat."

Wherever Stevenson wandered in later life, that "gusty, rainy, smoky, grim old city" kept for itself "the first place in the very bottom of his soul." It was half the world away, and after he was forty, that he wrote this beautiful pæan of reminiscence, which has been quoted in the *Life* by Mr. Graham Balfour: "I was born within the bounds of an earthly city, illustrious for her beauty, her tragic and picturesque associations, and for the credit of some of her brave sons. Writing as I do in a strange quarter of the world and a late day of my age, I can still behold the profile of her towers and chimneys, and the long trail of her smoke against the sunset; I can still hear those strains of martial music that she goes to bed with, ending each day, like an act of an opera, to the notes of bugles; still recall, with a grateful effort of memory, any one of a thousand beautiful and specious circumstances that pleased me, and that must have pleased any one, in my half-remembered past. It is the beautiful that I thus actively recall: the august airs of the castle on its rock, nocturnal passages of lights and trees, the sudden song of the blackbird in a suburban lane, rosy and dusky winter sunsets, the uninhabited splendours of the early dawn, the building up of the city on a misty day, house above house, spire above spire, until it was received into a sky of softly glowing clouds, and seemed to pass on and upward, by fresh grades and rises, city beyond city, a new Jerusalem, bodily scaling heaven."

The best of all guidebooks to this city of enchantment is Stevenson's own *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh*, wherein its manifold aspects are charmingly described and many anecdotes of its romantic past are chronicled. This book was

THE MANSE AT COLINTON

"The Manse is a sturdy and rectilinear edifice —a building, so to speak, with no nonsense about it. It is constructed staunchly of gray stone." —Page 30.

written when Stevenson was twenty-seven years of age. It was begun in Paris and finished in Le Monastier; and this fact calls attention to a significant method of the writer's mind. Throughout his lifelong wanderings, Stevenson rarely or never attempted to describe a place so long as he was in it. For his selection of descriptive details he relied always on the subconscious artistry of memory. He trusted his own mind to forget the non-essential; and he seized upon whatever he remembered as, by that token, the most essential features of a scene—the features, therefore, that cried out to be selected as the focal points of the picture to be suggested to the mind's eye of his readers.

But, oddly enough, Stevenson's little book on Edinburgh is less autobiographic than the majority of his other essays. He makes no mention, in this work, of those particular localities in which the intimate passages of his own life had been enshrined. The Stevensonian who visits Edinburgh will, therefore, feel the need of some additional notes to guide him to the homes and special haunts of the keenest lover of Auld Reekie since that "king of the romantics" who, in his own day, was wont to call it "mine own romantic town."

IV

It was at No. 8 Howard Place, in Edinburgh, that Robert Louis Stevenson was born, on November 13th, 1850. This is a sturdy little stone house of two stories, one of a row exactly similar to it, situated immediately to the north of the Water of Leith, in an outlying and scarcely fashionable quarter of the New Town. This house, however, can have made no impression on his mind; for in January, 1853, his

parents moved diagonally across the street to a somewhat larger house at No. 1 Inverleith Terrace. Here they lived till Stevenson was nearly seven; and it was here that he began to be cognizant of the external world. In his essay entitled *Rosa Quo Locorum*, he tells us how his imagination localized the twenty-third psalm in certain places immediately adjacent to this second residence.

In May, 1857, the family moved to No. 17 Heriot Row; and it was in this house, which remained their home till the death of Thomas Stevenson in 1887, that Louis passed the most impressionable period of his childhood. In no passage of his work does he formally describe the residence in Heriot Row; but many of those visual impressions of a city that recur continually in his writings are records of what he saw in very early years when he looked forth, day and night, from the windows of this house. Heriot Row is half a mile southward—or toward the centre of the city—from the Water of Leith, and occupies much higher ground than Howard Place. It is situated in the very heart of the New Town, in an urbane and stately neighbourhood. The northerly, or rear, windows of the houses of Heriot Row open on a declivity of hill and overlook innumerable roofs and chimney-pots that fall away to the Firth of Forth and lead the eye, on clear days, to the habitable hills of Fife upon the farther side. The front, or southerly, windows look across "the dark belt of the Queen Street gardens" to the higher houses upon Queen Street. Directly in front of No. 17 there stands a lamp-post—because of which [so deep at first, and in the end so wide, may be the influence of a single concrete object] little children in far-divided lands now sing the

magic line, "For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door."

At No. 52 Queen Street, diagonally across the gardens from Heriot Row, was the residence of Sir James Young Simpson, Bart., who discovered the use of chloroform as an anæsthetic, and to whom a statue has been erected in the Princes Street Gardens. This house was a haunt of Stevenson's in his teens and twenties, for the children of the great physician were among his most intimate friends. Sir Walter Simpson was the "Cigarette" of the *Inland Voyage*, and was also Stevenson's host on a yachting cruise in August, 1874, from which he learned (according to his own account) the few details of seamanship which were necessary for the handling of the *Hispaniola* in *Treasure Island*. Sir Walter's surviving sister, Miss Eve Blantyre Simpson, has published three books about R. L. S. which afford intimate glimpses of his personality in his youthful years.

When the present writer visited No. 17 Heriot Row in August, 1910, the house was vacant and for sale; and Mr. Francis Watt, in his recent interesting book on *R. L. S.*, records that it was still unoccupied when he saw it in the autumn of 1912. If Stevenson were as highly considered in his native city as he is in the rest of the English-reading world, a fund might be raised for taking over the house in Heriot Row and establishing it as a permanent museum to his memory.

There is another house in Edinburgh that is of interest to travellers on the trail of R. L. S. This is the ancestral residence of the Stevenson family, at No. 1 Baxter's Place. This roomy and somewhat gloomy edifice was built by Thomas

Smith, the stepfather (and also the father-in-law) of Robert Stevenson; and was inhabited successively by Robert and his sons, of whom the youngest, Thomas Stevenson, was the father of R. L. S. It is situated at the outset of Leith Walk, in a quarter that has latterly degenerated to a district of petty commerce; and the dignity of the old house has been diminished by a row of single-storied shops that have been packed in front of it. Stevenson described this house, in some detail, in a fragment of family history written in Samoa; but he had never actually lived there, since his grandfather Robert had died four months before R. L. S. was born.

A transition of only a few hundred yards will carry the traveller across Leith Walk to the corner of Antigua Street, where stands to this day the stationer's shop that is celebrated in *A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured.* The shop is still "dark and smells of Bibles"; but, alas! there is no longer a toy-theatre in the window that juts out into Leith Walk—for Skelt's Juvenile Drama, "after having changed its name to Park's, to Webb's, to Redington's, and last of all to Pollock's, has now become, for the most part, a memory."

Leith Walk, which is described in this essay as "the wide thoroughfare that joins the city of my childhood with the sea," was often traversed by Louis in his boyhood, when, as he says, "upon any Saturday, we made a party to behold the ships." It is not surprising, therefore, that he should have allowed his hero, David Balfour, to follow this route to the suburb of Pilrig, where he interviewed, in a house that is still extant, the actual James Balfour of Pilrig, sometime Pro-

fessor of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh University, who was Stevenson's great-great-grandfather on his mother's side.

V

Because of his precarious health in childhood, Stevenson's schooling was exceedingly irregular. From 1858 to 1861 he attended, in the intervals of illness, a school kept by a Mr. Henderson in India Street. This street runs northward out of Heriot Row, one block to the west of the Stevenson home. From 1864 to 1867 he was an irregular attendant at Mr. Thomson's school in Frederick Street; and to reach this school he had merely to step across the gardens from his house. Frederick Street leads southward from Heriot Row to the centre of the modern city in Princes Street, three blocks away.

But the only one of Stevenson's schools which really repays the attention of the visitor to his native city is the Edinburgh Academy, which he attended for a year and a half, beginning in the autumn of 1861. This famous institution is located on low ground near the Water of Leith, a few blocks southwest of Stevenson's birthplace. Not far from this locality was formerly situated the village of Silvermills, which is mentioned so frequently in *Kidnapped* and *David Balfour*. The Academy building is a somewhat dingy imitation of a Greek temple, set in a gravel yard made raucous by the cries of many boys.

To reach the Academy from Heriot Row, Louis was accustomed to run downhill by way of Howe Street, passing the rather formal and forbidding edifice of St. Stephen's Church, where his father—an officer of the congregation—

was a regular attendant. A continuous line of iron railings separates the sidewalks of Howe Street from the areas of the houses; and it is easy for the pilgrim to picture little Louis rattling on these railings with his "clackan"—a wooden club with which the Edinburgh schoolboy was wont to make morning hideous on his way to school. This noisy exercise was subsequently assigned by Stevenson to the hero of *The Misadventures of John Nicholson.*

From the Academy, it is necessary to traverse nearly the entire city, and to climb over a high hill and two successive valleys, in order to reach Edinburgh University, in South Bridge Street, where, from 1867 to 1875, Stevenson idled through the training for his two false starts in life—first as an engineer, and subsequently as a lawyer. Of the impressive quadrangle of the University there is a suggestive description in a letter written by Louis, some years later, to Sir Sidney Colvin. This quadrangle has not changed its aspect since the student days of R. L. S., except that the massive cupola over the entry was not erected till a later date.

The Stevensonian who visits Edinburgh University will be most interested in the rooms of the Speculative Society, which still answer exactly to the description that was given of them in the essay on *A College Magazine*—"a hall, Turkey-carpeted, hung with pictures, looking, when lighted up at night with fire and candle, like some goodly dining-room; a passage-like library, walled with books in their wire cages, and a corridor with a fireplace, benches, a table, many prints of famous members, and a mural tablet to the virtues of a former secretary." These details remain unaltered; but

ALNWICK, ON THE GREAT NORTH ROAD

"Stevenson's mind was particularly captivated by the legendary pageant of the Great North Road, over which the tide of travel had swept, for many centuries, northward to his native Edinburgh. In 1884 he began a novel which was called *The Great North Road*. Later in life he returned to the haunting prospect of this highway and used it as the setting for several of the chapters of *St. Ives*."—Page 55.

two others have been added, to remind the visitor more particularly of R. L. S. One is a photograph of him, hung prominently on the wall; and the other is the Union Jack of the schooner-yacht *Casco*—the flag which was draped over the body of Tusitala when he lay dead at Vailima and the natives watched all night beside his bier. This token was presented to the Speculative Society by Stevenson's fellow-member and lifelong friend, Mr. Charles Baxter.

A visit to the Parliament House, where, in the ancient hall in which the Parliament of Scotland was formerly convened, Stevenson walked in wig and gown with other young and briefless advocates during his short career as a lawyer in 1875, will lead the traveller to the very Heart of Midlothian—the centre of the Old Town of Edinburgh. The hall itself is very beautiful, and well repays a visit, with its noble oaken rafters, its stained-glass window streamed through by the southern sun, and its many busts and portraits of famous advocates.

It is but a step from the Parliament House to St. Giles's Cathedral, where, on a wall adjacent to the southern aisle, the visitor will find the beautiful bas-relief of Stevenson by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, which has been erected in honour of R. L. S. "by readers in all quarters of the world."

From the Cathedral, the High Street ascends directly to the summit of the precipitous rock which is crowned by Edinburgh Castle. It was here, of course, that St. Ives was confined as a prisoner from France; and the reader of the novel will probably turn dizzy as he gazes down the

precipice where the hero dangled himself to freedom by a rope.

VI

The lofty Castle offers an uninterrupted prospect of all of Edinburgh; and from this point of vantage, with the city spread out like a relief-map beneath his feet, the pilgrim may pick out many other localities which are particularly celebrated in the *Picturesque Notes* or put to literary uses in the essays and the tales of R. L. S.

Perhaps the most fascinating chapter in Stevenson's little book on Edinburgh is that devoted to the Greyfriars churchyard; and a reading of this chapter on the ground itself affords the student a valuable clue to the author's method of selecting descriptive details. It has been already noted that he wrote this passage in France, and wrote it from memory. The pilgrim need not, therefore, be surprised to notice that Stevenson has deleted many of those details which bulk most largely on the sight of a person present at Greyfriars, and has made much of many details which would utterly elude the observation of most visitors.

But an even more enchanting experience awaits the traveller who will read the essay entitled *Old Mortality* in the very graveyard that is carefully described in the opening paragraph. This is the old Calton Hill burial ground, which is situated half way up the steep rise at the east end of Princes Street. It is still "looked upon on the one side by a prison, on the other by the windows of a quiet hotel"; but, alas, the "beautiful housemaid of the hotel," who "once, for some days together, dumbly flirted with the author from a window and kept his wild heart flying," is no longer to be

noted from the graveyard. Doubtless she, too, has paid her toll to Old Mortality; but it is a sorrow to record that "the wise Eugenia" does not even appear to have left any successors to continue the tradition of romance.

In so brief a chapter as the present, it is, unfortunately, impossible to guide the traveller to all the haunts of Stevenson in Edinburgh; but the places that have already been enumerated are those that require the chief attention of the student of his life and of his works. To pick out all the localities that are mentioned in *David Balfour* and *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston*, for instance, would require a very minute exploration of the Old Town; and the traveller who undertakes to read his way through Edinburgh with the *Picturesque Notes* will find himself kept pleasantly occupied for many days.

VII

Until a year or two ago, it was possible for privileged visitors to Edinburgh to be taken nearer to the heart of R. L. S. than any one can ever reach henceforward by making a pilgrimage upon his trail. The death of Alison Cunningham in the summer of 1913 severed the last link that connected the childhood of Louis Stevenson with the living world. There are other people left in Edinburgh who remember him, and some who will tell you tales in disapproval of him; but there are none who knew him so well and loved him so deeply as Cummy—his "second mother," his "first wife."

It was my privilege to pass many hours in her company, on several different days in the summer of 1910, three years before her death, and to enjoy the eager volubility of her

talk as she rambled on in reminiscence of her "Master Lou." She was already of a great age, and the beauty of her face seemed to have been chiselled in eternal granite. She had become almost completely deaf, and her eyesight was fading rapidly; but the dimming of these senses seemed only to accentuate the expressiveness of her voice and of her gestures. She had a grand, hymn-singing voice, with a sort of sturdy gentleness of intonation. Her hands were the most eloquent that I have ever known. She had a way of suddenly seizing both your hands in hers; and by that touch she knew you, and had no need of hearing or of sight. Louis has sung of her "most comfortable hand"; and there is no other adjective so fitting to describe a feeling that afforded you a sense of strong shelter and insuperable peace. There were times, too, when Cummy would grasp you by both shoulders and draw you eagerly to her bosom; and it was as if you were being taken to the heart of all of womankind.

Despite her disabilities of sight and hearing, she went forth every day for a brisk walk with her favourite dog; and there was an ardour in her talk which held aloof the touch of time. She could seldom answer a precise question; she had become, indeed, incapable of conversation; but her talk was a tireless soliloquy, lacking in coherence to be sure, but always eloquent and often illuminative. She would ramble on through many moods; and now a mist would hover in her eyes at the touch of some tender recollection, and again her rich voice would break out into peals of laughter at the impetus of that rollicking mood which would surge up very often from the years that were.

There were many treasures in the little room in which she

lived—a photograph of Mrs. Thomas Stevenson taken at an early age, and showing her very lovely in the quaint dress of the middle of the nineteenth century, a painting by Bob Stevenson which Cummy didn't really like but which she valued as the work of an adopted nephew, several pictures and other mementoes of Louis himself, and a charming photograph, of which she was especially proud, which showed the young and beautiful Duchess of Sutherland standing gracefully beside a chair which had been set for Cummy in the gardens of Swanston Cottage. "I told Her Grace that I should stand," said Cummy, "being only an ordinary woman; but Her Ladyship would have me seated in the chair—and there we are, with a Duchess standing in the presence of old me!"

Of the many anecdotes that Cummy told me, there is one that seems especially worth recording, since it has not yet made its way into any of the books on R. L. S. When little Louis was about five years old, he did something naughty, and Cummy stood him up in a corner and told him he would have to stay there for ten minutes. Then she left the room. At the end of the allotted period, she returned and said, "Time's up, Master Lou: you may come out now." But the little boy stood motionless in his penitential corner. "That's enough; time's up," repeated Cummy. And then the child mystically raised his hand, and, with a strange light in his eyes, "Hush . . . " he said, "I'm telling myself a story. . . ."

She would tell you proudly that Louis, in his childhood, was a very religious boy. "He got that from me, you know," she added, with a friendly little nudge. But she

would tell you even more fondly of the times when he would wheedle a shilling out of his father and lead Cummy forth upon an expedition to squander this new fortune broadcast through the world.

Well, Cummy is gone now; and the literary pilgrim can no longer jangle the bell of the echoing house in which she lived and climb up to the little room which her noble, human presence made so great. Edinburgh, that inexhaustible city of romance, remains to be explored by future Stevensonians; but those of us who remember Cummy must ever be haunted, on returning to Auld Reekie in either fact or fancy, by the recollection of an empty chair.

Chapter Two

THE REST OF SCOTLAND

CHAPTER TWO

THE REST OF SCOTLAND

I

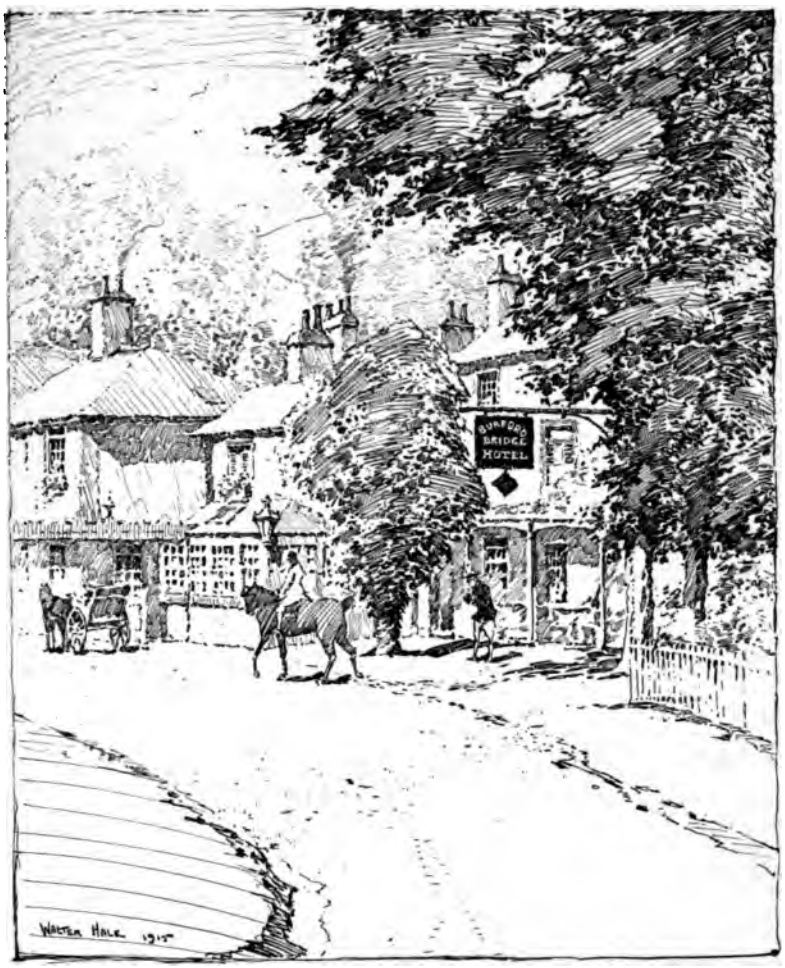
EDINBURGH is not only the most nobly seated of all European capitals; it is also the most charmingly surrounded. All guidebooks are agreed that, though the city itself may be seen in a couple of days, it is necessary to devote at least a week to the environs. If you climb to Edinburgh Castle, high perched upon its precipice of rock, and look afar in all directions, you will understand the reason why. On every side except the east, where the sea melts into a mystery of gray, the sky is hedged with hills—familiar, habitable hills that beckon you to wander; and as you gaze upon them you recall that sentence of De Quincey's—the same De Quincey who is buried in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, deep below the bastions of the Castle where you stand—"Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!" . . . There is an impulse that calls you to go winging over the hills and far away; but not so very far, neither—for you would wish to fly home at evening to the lofty Castle, and watch the lights come out along the stately line of Princes Street, and a myriad other city lamps become illumined like a galaxy of stars beneath your feet, pricking out a map of Edinburgh through the dark.

Those who love Edinburgh love to roam among those hills and to return to Auld Reekie in the evening. Here is a

city whose suburbs are not suburbs, but points of view from which you may look back upon the crown of Scotland. Hill after hill you wander over, only to look back—still loyal to that queenliest of cities while you visit the little towns-in-waiting that attend her.

Southwest from Edinburgh Castle, that line of hills which rises only three or four miles away, and curves so comfortably into a distance beyond the utmost verge of sight, is the Pentlands; and this very name reminds us that we are visiting Robert Louis Stevenson at home. His first printed work was "a page of history" on the subject of *The Pentland Rising*, which was written when he was barely sixteen years of age, and was issued as a little pamphlet in grass-green wrappers by Andrew Elliott, of Edinburgh. The bookshop of Andrew Elliott is still doing business under the old name at the same address, No. 17 Princes Street; but no copies of *The Pentland Rising* can now be purchased there. Nearly all of the original edition was bought up by Stevenson's father; and the pamphlet, thus withdrawn summarily from circulation, has become one of the rarest items in the libraries of Stevenson collectors.

In the Pentland Hills are situated two of the best-belovèd homes of R. L. S.; and, since he always worked from recollection, it is not surprising that he set *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston* in this locality, and that he celebrated in his essays and his poems those particular places in the Pentlands which had registered the deepest impressions on his mind. In a single day, if the traveller be sturdy on his legs, he may trace the trail of Stevenson through the Pentland country; and the quickest way to launch himself upon this literary



THE BURFORD BRIDGE TAVERN—DORKING

"Of one actual English tavern our author appears to have been particularly fond:—the inn at Burford Bridge, 'with its arbours and green garden and silent, eddying river.' . . . . . Louis lived twice at this haunted and historic tavern—in April, 1878, and again in April, 1882." —Page 56.

pilgrimage is to take a train from the Caledonian Station to the little town of Colinton, which is only four miles away.

II

Colinton is a modern-looking suburb, and most of it has lately been built up with those new-fangled villas which Louis cursed so heartily in his *Picturesque Notes on Edinburgh;* but one of these villas is now the residence of Mrs. George W. Balfour, the widow of "that wise youth, my uncle," and this very courteous lady will direct you to the Manse.

The main highway of Colinton overhangs a wooded dell, at the bottom of which the Water of Leith ambles from mill to mill in a series of diminutive cascades. From this highway you climb down to Colinton Church, which is perched midway of the declivity and is surrounded by a sloping graveyard. The church, which was built as late as 1771, is inconspicuous; and nobody would ever pause to look at it, were it not for the fact that its apparently unimportant pulpit was occupied from 1823 to 1860 by the Reverend Lewis Balfour, that maternal grandfather of R. L. S. who "moved in his blood, and whispered words to him, and sat efficient in the very knot and centre of his being."

The slanting graveyard is restrained by a stone wall from launching its gathered dead like an avalanche upon the level little plot below, where Colinton Manse, surrounded by its garden, is embraced within a wide curve of the stream. If you dangle your feet over this retaining wall, you can survey the entire garden, while you re-read the opening pages of the essay on *The Manse*, in which this garden is described. A

comparison of the actual scene with Stevenson's description of it affords us an important clue to the process of his art. He has selected very few details; but these few are precisely those which produce the most vivid impression on the immediate observer and which are destined to be retained subsequently in the memory. The great yew tree still makes "a pleasing horror of shade"; and the eye, after wandering elsewhere in the garden, insists upon returning to that pleasing horror again and yet again.

I was lolling on that wall, where "after nightfall 'spunkies' might be seen to dance, at least by children," when a gardener busy among the "flower-plots lying warm in sunshine" invited me to leap down into the garden. All at once, as I alighted in that sacred precinct, a throng of little lisping poems sang, remembered, in my ears; for here was indeed that Child's Garden, of which a lyric memory has been wafted, with our English language, over all the rolling rondure of the world, so that now "the children sing in far Japan" such originally local lines as these:

> Here is the mill with the humming of thunder,
> Here is the weir with the wonder of foam,
> Here is the sluice with the race running under—
> Marvellous places, though handy to home!

It has already been stated in these pages that Stevenson's habit was never to describe a place except in recollection. Nearly all the pieces that make up the *Child's Garden of Verses* were written at Hyères, in the south of France, or at Bournemouth, in the south of England; but many of them are localized in the actual garden of the Manse at Colinton,

which he remembered through a mist of over twenty years. The water that "made music in his memory" was "that dirty Water of Leith" whose sand still "slopes into brown obscurity with a glint of gold."

To appreciate the *Child's Garden* as a work of art, we must remember that the poems which Louis fluted on his "penny whistle" were not so much written *for* children as written *in recollection of* his own experience of childhood. He did not ask himself what children would like; he merely remembered what he himself had liked when he had been a child. His rhymes, as he stated in the *Envoy* to two of the cousins who had played with him at Colinton, were veritably "rhymes of old delight"; and this point will be impressed most vividly upon the traveller who, in the garden of the Manse, may identify the very trees and bushes that are commemorated in many of these poems.

The present incumbent of Colinton Manse was away upon a holiday when I dropped unceremoniously into the precinct of that "well-belovèd house"; and the gardener, upon his own initiative, guided me through the empty rooms. The "many Indian pictures" and other "wonders of the East" which had made the Manse alluringly outlandish in the days of Dr. Balfour had been, of course, denuded from the walls; but it was still possible to imagine one's way backward to the early years of R. L. S. in the simple little chamber on the second story that used to be his bedroom. Through the open window one could hear the little river rushing to the weir; and the wooded cliff of the sky-assailing hill across the stream still seemed a proper hiding-place for pirates.

Externally, the Manse is a sturdy and rectilinear edifice —a building, so to speak, with no nonsense about it. It is constructed staunchly of gray stone. It does not look so large as it seemed to Louis "by the standard of his childish stature"; but it does present the aspect of a "roomy house." It has not been altered in the last half century, except that what was formerly a side door has now become the main entrance; and the Manse and the surrounding garden—not to mention the very friendly gardener—make the visitor so much at home that he is loath to leave that charmed locality, even to stretch his legs over a brief reach of Pentland country to the still more charmed locality of Swanston.

III

The pastoral hamlet of Swanston sleeps but little more than two miles southeast from Colinton; and, if you are really a lover of the best of all celebrants of *Walking Tours*, you will make this way afoot. The road leads past the Hunter's Tryst, in a little fold or wrinkle at the foot of the Pentland Hills.

It was in 1867, when R. L. S. was seventeen, that the Stevensons first rented Swanston Cottage; and, thereafter, it remained for many years their country residence. No other home, not even the house in Heriot Row, produced such deep impressions on the memory of one who was to wander over more than half the habitable globe. It is a far cry from Swanston Cottage to Vailima; but when, in the all-too-early sundown of his years, Stevenson dictated *St. Ives* to Mrs. Strong, his heart returned with a pang of recollection to this little house among his "hills of home," and

he chose it as the scene of two of the most moving passages in the story.

Chapter VII of *St. Ives* is entitled "Swanston Cottage." It is to this hidden haven that the hero makes his way after his escape from Edinburgh Castle. Later, in Chapter XXVI, which is entitled "The Cottage at Night," the garden of this old home of Stevenson's is made the setting of one of the few successful love-scenes in his fiction. The description of the cottage, written at Vailima a dozen years since he had seen it last, is surprisingly exact. "The cottage was a little quaint place of many rough-cast gables and gray roofs. It had something the air of a rambling infinitesimal cathedral, the body of it rising in the midst two stories high, with a steep-pitched roof, and sending out upon all hands (as it were chapter-houses, chapels, and transepts) one-storied and dwarfish projections. . . . The place seemed hidden away, being not only concealed in the trees of the garden, but, on the side on which I approached it, buried as high as the eaves by the rising of the ground."

This description, from the seventh chapter of *St. Ives*, still serves the traveller to-day. Swanston Cottage is at first somewhat difficult for the foot-farer to find, because it is folded so aloofly in a little lap of the hills. As Louis wrote, in his descriptive poem entitled *Ille Terrarum:*

> Atween the muckle Pentland's knees,
> Secure ye sit.

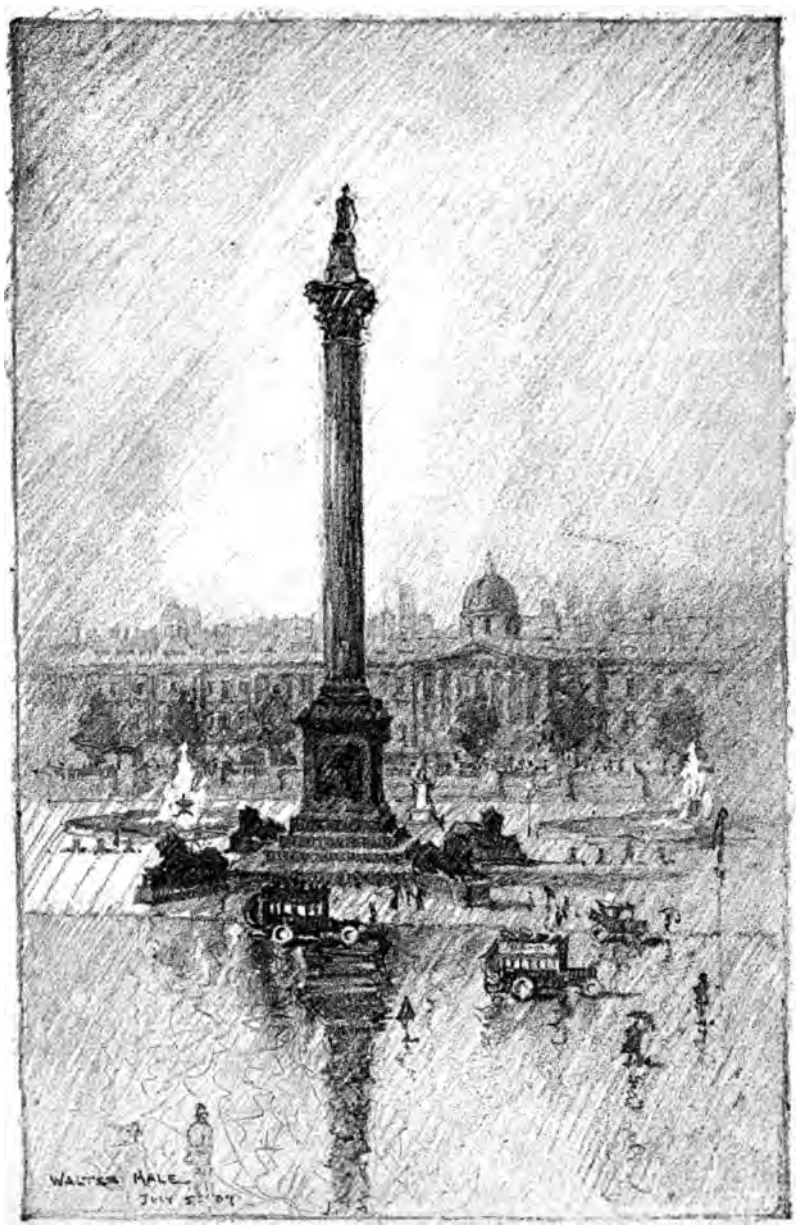
Stevenson's little-read poems in Scots are among the most intimately personal of all his writings; and it is a significant

fact that, in more than one of these poems, he has celebrated the locality of Swanston.

Swanston Cottage is now the summer residence of Lord Guthrie, who is one of the most eminent jurists in Scotland. Forty years ago, he was a fellow-student of Stevenson's in the law classes at Edinburgh University, and a fellow-member of the Speculative Society. His love of R. L. S. is now a living virtue, and not merely a shadowy recollection from the years that were.

A legend on the gate to the grounds of Swanston Cottage warns unauthorized intruders that the place is private property; but an accredited student of Stevenson has only to send in his card in order to enjoy the generous hospitality of Lord Guthrie. He will be permitted to wander all about the lovely little garden, and to re-read at his leisure that youthful essay on *An Old Scotch Gardener* which recalls to life the sturdy Robert Young who used to tend "the garden in the lap of the hill, with its rocks overgrown with clematis, its shadowy walks, and the splendid breadth of champaign that one saw from the northwest corner." The poems, also, in praise of that locality seem to read more sweetly there; and the visitor may still discern the initials "R. L. S." cut proudly on a tree trunk, with the accompanying insignia of the rising sun.

The interior of Swanston Cottage is no less fascinating to the traveller on the trail of Stevenson. The little room on the second story, which projects with a bow-window toward the garden, was formerly the den of R. L. S.; and this room has been set apart by Lord Guthrie as a permanent memorial to his famous friend. Upon the walls are



TRAFALGAR SQUARE—LONDON

The scene of the murder of Mr. Malthus, of The Suicide Club. "Any tourist will notice that the parapet of Trafalgar Square is scarcely high enough to insure the instant death of any one who might be flung summarily to the flagstones below."—Page 61.

hung the originals of all but one of the letters that Stevenson wrote in his lifetime to his old nurse, Alison Cunningham; and the single missing letter is supplanted by a photograph of the original. Lord Guthrie looked after Cummy in her declining years; and she was frequently a visitor to the sweet, secluded cottage where she had lived so long ago as the second mother of the youth who now is noted through the world.

Only a few steps from Swanston Cottage is situated Swanston Farmhouse; and around this are clustered a dozen thatched-roofed, whitewashed little cottages, where live the shepherds of those hills. One of these is pointed out to travellers as the former residence of John Todd, whose name was made immortal in Stevenson's essay entitled *Pastoral.* It is pleasant to re-read this essay "perched on a hump of the declivity not far from Halkerside," and to recall that former giant of this slumberous locality whose voice "shook the hills when he was angry" and who was wont to go "winding up the brae, keeping his captain's eye upon all sides, and breaking, ever and again, into a spasm of bellowing that seemed to make the evening bleaker."

The traveller who wishes to push farther into the Pentlands may identify several other places that are celebrated in the works of R. L. S. Glencorse Church, for instance, which is the scene of Chapter VI of *Weir of Hermiston,* is only a few miles southeast of Swanston. This church is described in some detail in a letter addressed to Mrs. Sitwell from Swanston Cottage in June, 1875; and it seems also to have served as the setting of the poem entitled *A Lowden Sabbath Morn.* From Vailima, while he was composing

Weir of Hermiston, Stevenson wrote of it again in a letter addressed to the late S. R. Crockett: "Do you know where the road crosses the burn under Glencorse Church? Go there and say a prayer for me: *moriturus salutat.* See that it's a sunny day; I would like it to be a Sunday, but that's not possible in the premises; and stand on the right-hand bank just where the road goes down into the water, and shut your eyes, and if I don't appear to you! well, it can't be helped, and will be extremely funny."

But the most vivid description of that portion of the Pentland Hills which Louis had explored so intimately in his rambles with the Swanston shepherd occurs in the following lines, which were written at Apemama in the South Sea Islands, and which prove that, however far he wandered, his heart was ever faithful to his "hills of home":

> The tropics vanish, and meseems that I,
> From Halkerside, from topmost Allermuir,
> Or steep Caerketton, dreaming gaze again.
> Far set in fields and woods, the town I see
> Spring gallant from the shallows of her smoke,
> Cragged, spired, and turreted, her virgin fort
> Beflagged. About, on seaward-drooping hills
> New folds of city glitter. Last, the Forth
> Wheels ample waters set with sacred isles,
> And populous Fife smokes with a score of towns.

IV

Another brief excursion from the capital will lead the pilgrim to the little town of Queensferry, which is situated on the Firth of Forth, about eight miles northwest from

Edinburgh Castle. This trip may most conveniently be made in one of those sight-seeing motor-cars that drag bewildered tourists in droves to gape at the great Forth Bridge which, as a work of engineering, is justly celebrated among the wonders of the modern world.

This gigantic bridge now overhangs an ancient, inconspicuous little tavern, which was famed in literary annals many years before the railroad was invented. I have watched American tourists turn their backs upon this tavern while they gazed upward to admire the steel structure overhead; and yet, before this bridge had been begun, Louis Stevenson had noted, in *A Gossip on Romance*, that Americans were wont to seek the Hawes Inn at Queensferry "for the sake of Lovel and Oldbuck, who dined there at the beginning of the *Antiquary*."

The Hawes Inn, as he tells us in this essay, made always a strong call upon his fancy. "There it stands, apart from the town, beside the pier, in a climate of its own, half inland, half marine—in front, the ferry bubbling with the tide and the guardship swinging to her anchor; behind, the old garden with the trees. . . . I have lived . . . at the Hawes . . . in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place; but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure and suspense, nothing befell me . . . worth remark. The man or the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo. . . ."

This passage was originally written in 1882. When the

essay was reprinted five years later, in *Memories and Portraits*, the author added this interesting note: "Since the above was written I have tried to launch the boat with my own hands in *Kidnapped*." The Hawes Inn still answers, in every detail, to the description that has just been quoted; and the traveller of to-day will find it very easy to reënact, in his imagination, the scenes of *Kidnapped* that are set there.

It is from this tavern that David Balfour sets forth in the brig *Covenant* at the outset of the story; and it is to this tavern that he returns at the end of his long and perilous wanderings through the heather. The town of Queensferry straggles westward from the Hawes Inn, along a single street that follows the curving of the firth. It is a quaint little ancient-looking place, utterly gray in colour and rather melancholy in its somnolence; and the visitor will note the aptness of David Balfour's description of it in Chapter XXVII of *Kidnapped:* "I was in the long street of Queensferry before the sun was up. It was a fairly built burgh, the houses of good stone, many slated; the town-hall not so fine, I thought, as that of Peebles, nor yet the street so noble; but, take it altogether, it put me to shame for my foul tatters."

Four miles eastward from Queensferry, on the Firth of Forth, is the quiet town of Cramond, which is thus described in Chapter XXX of *St. Ives:* "A little hamlet on a little river, embowered in woods, and looking forth over a great flat of quicksand to where a little islet stood planted in the sea." Here the traveller may visit Cramond Church and Cramond Inn, "a hostelry of no very promising appearance" which is

the scene of the convivial adventures that are narrated in the chapter to which reference has been made.

V

The student of *Catriona*, or *David Balfour* as we call it in America, will wish to wander eastward from the capital along the seashore. His wanderings will lead him past the Gullane Sands to the jagged promontory where the ruins of Tantallon Castle look seaward toward the Bass. The Bass Rock, as the reader will remember, is the scene of Black Andie's tale of *Tod Lapraik*, which is told in Chapter XV of *Catriona*. This locality had haunted the imagination of Stevenson since his childhood. In his autobiographic essay called *The Lantern Bearers*, he tells us that "the Bass in the eye of fancy still flew the colours of King James, and in the ear of fancy the arches of Tantallon still rang with horseshoe iron and echoed to the commands of Bell-the-Cat." The "certain easterly fisher village" that is so eloquently celebrated in this famous essay is North Berwick, a little to the west of Tantallon. The town is now somewhat overgrown with seaside hotels, which are haunted by ardent practitioners of the national game of golf; but the points which are selected for description at the outset of *The Lantern Bearers* may still be picked out and identified by the literary pilgrim.

It was from this particular stretch of seacoast that Stevenson apparently derived those impressions which he has recorded with such thrilling vividness in *The Pavilion on the Links*. This novelette, which was written when the author was only twenty-nine years old, is seldom spoken of, even among people who regard themselves as ardent Stevensoni-

ans; but I remember now a conversation with Sir Sidney Colvin, in his hospitable study at "the Monument," in which this most authoritative critic expressed an admiration of this story which struck me at the moment as extreme. I had evinced a temporary preference for the essays of R. L. S. and had suggested that *Pulvis et Umbra* was perhaps a greater work than any of his narratives. Sir Sidney disagreed with this suggestion. It appeared that he had never quite approved of that dark Darwinian sermon which I regarded as Stevenson's supreme achievement; and, in pleading for the preëminence of Stevenson's fiction over his essays, he requested me to re-read *The Pavilion on the Links*, which he considered one of the very greatest masterpieces of his friend. I state this little point at present without argument, because it seems to me exceedingly suggestive.

VI

To follow, chapter by chapter, the adventures that are chronicled in *Kidnapped*, the traveller would have to circumnavigate the whole of the peninsula of Scotland. It will be remembered that the *Covenant*, with the hero unwillingly trepanned on board, sets sail from Queensferry to the north, turns westward round the Orkney Islands, and in the perilous channel between the mainland and the Hebrides runs down an open boat and rescues from the wreckage a man who turns out to be no other than Alan Breck Stewart. The author made shift to navigate the *Covenant* along this intricate course, because he could recall a tour of those waters which he himself had made, at the age of eighteen, in the steam yacht *Pharos*, which was employed upon the service

"SKERRYVORE"—BOURNEMOUTH

"Skerryvore is a two-story villa of yellow brick, overgrown with ivy, and capped with many high-pitched gables of blue slate. It turns its back to the road, and overlooks a garden which scrambles over the edge of the ravine." —Page 64.

of the Commissioners of Northern Lights. The *Covenant* is ultimately wrecked upon the coast of Mull, and the hero is cast lonely on the Isle of Earraid. This little island played a singularly prominent part in Stevenson's career; and all faithful students of his work should visit it.

To reach this tiny isle from Edinburgh, the modern traveller may be advised to proceed to Glasgow through the Trossachs, and to follow thence the common track of tourists through the Crinan Canal to Oban. Oban, which is not unjustly celebrated as a sort of little Naples of the north, is the most convenient centre for a series of excursions on the trail of Alan Breck and David Balfour after they are cast ashore in *Kidnapped.*

In Oban you will hear no word of Earraid, for the little island has no fame outside the works of R. L. S.; but if you will entrust yourself to the excursion steamer that sails daily around the island of Mull, calling for an hour at Staffa and for another hour at Iona, you will be transported within a few hundred yards of the unhomely coast of Earraid and will be enabled to observe it at your leisure.

"The little Isle of Earraid lies close in to the southwest corner of the Ross of Mull; the sound of Iona on one side, across which you may see the isle and church of Columba; the open sea to the other, where you shall be able to mark, on a clear, surfy day, the breakers running white on many sunken rocks:" it is thus described by R. L. S. in his *Memoirs of an Islet.* The island is at present denuded of any human habitation; but it had a temporary population of one hundred and twenty-two when Louis spent three weeks upon it in the summer of 1870. The Dhu Heartach light-

house, "fifteen miles away to seaward," was at that time being constructed by his "family of engineers"; and R. L. S., who had not yet renounced the profession of his forebears, was serving at this temporary post of Earraid as a sort of amateur apprentice.

This whole experience is detailed, with even more than his accustomed felicity in sheer description, in the *Memoirs of an Islet;* but, in the introduction to this essay, R. L. S. reminds us that he had already written of Earraid twice before. "I put a whole family there," he says, "in one of my tales; and later on threw upon its shores and condemned to several days of rain and shellfish on its tumbled boulders the hero of another."

The first tale referred to in this sentence is, of course, *The Merry Men.* In this novelette the actual island is fictitiously named "Aros" and the Ross of Mull is called the "Ross of Grisapol"; but the forlorn and terrifying aspect of the sea-beleaguered islet repeats exactly the impression produced by Earraid on the traveller to-day. The "great granite rocks" may still be noted from the deck of the excursion steamer, to "go down together in troops to the sea like cattle on a summer's day. . . . On calm days you can go wandering between them in a boat for hours, echoes following you about the labyrinth; but when the sea is up, Heaven help the man that hears that cauldron boiling."

In *Kidnapped,* Stevenson has called the island by its actual name; and the traveller will poignantly appreciate the tragic loneliness of David Balfour as he picked his way among those barren boulders, since the aspect of Earraid is to this day intolerably desolate.

From this thrice-celebrated Isle of Earraid, David Balfour makes his way, across the adjacent island of Mull, to Loch Aline in Morven; and thence, traversing the Linnhe Loch, is set down in the Appin country. This trail may be clearly traced upon the map that is bound up with the tale of *Kidnapped;* but only a very hardy adventurer would attempt to follow it on foot to-day.

It is easy, however, to proceed by boat or coach from the tourist centre of Oban to Duror in the Appin country, which is close to the scene of that historic murder which cuts so large a figure in the tale of *Kidnapped;* or else, the general region may be explored approximately enough if the traveller will follow the usual tourist route by steamer to the headwaters of Loch Etive and thence by coach, over the pass of Glencoe, to the slate-gray town of Ballachulish.

To follow afoot the subsequent wanderings of David and Alan through the heather, the traveller must be willing to undergo considerable hardship. The mountains of the Appin country and of the neighbouring district of Glencoe are neither very high nor very harsh; but the whole locality is unutterably lonely. You may tramp all day through the inhospitable heather without encountering a single human habitation; and to plunge into that Highland wilderness, with the nearest food and shelter nearly thirty miles away, requires a daring that is not demanded of a foot-farer over the more closely populated trails of Switzerland.

VII

A separate excursion must be made, from either Inverness or Edinburgh, in order to visit the three remaining

towns of Scotland whose names are written with the largest letters in Stevenson's biography.

Readers of the reminiscent essay entitled *My First Book —Treasure Island* will naturally wish to visit Braemar, where "on a chill September morning, by the cheek of a brisk fire, and the rain drumming on the window," he began that classic book for boys that made his fortune and his fame. It was here, at the close of the inclement summer of 1881, that, in a high "tide of delighted industry," he "turned out fifteen chapters" of *Treasure Island* at the rate of a chapter a day; and it was here that the tale was first read to Mr. Edmund Gosse, and to Dr. A. H. Japp, who ultimately sold it to Mr. Henderson, the editor of *Young Folks*.

Braemar is a comfortable hamlet in the Grampians, not far from the royal residence of Balmoral. You take a train from Aberdeen to Ballater, and complete the journey by coach. The River Dee roars rushing through Braemar; and as you linger on the little bridge at night and watch the lamplight flicker from the windows of a hundred cottages that are scattered haphazard over the surrounding hills, you will tell yourself that here was indeed a fitting place to imagine a tale of "all the old romance, retold exactly in the ancient way." It is thoroughly characteristic of Stevenson that the chapters written at Braemar were set in the south-west of England; since, as the reader has already been reminded, he never could see any locality with artistic clearness unless he was writing at a definite distance from it.

It is a long but lovely drive from Braemar to the railway that will lead the pilgrim to Pitlochry. Here, in a wooded incision through the Highlands that is carved by the River

MENTONE, FROM THE JETTY

"Stevenson was in Mentone for the first two months of 1863, and again from Christmas, 1863, to May, 1864. It was the first foreign place that ever interested him. To Mentone he returned ten years later, when he was 'ordered south' in November, 1873. There he imbibed a love of the luxurious southland that was needed to complete a nature that had been cradled among the winds and winters of the north."—Page 80.

Tummel, is situated Kinnaird Cottage, where Stevenson lived for two months in the summer of 1881, before moving onward to Braemar. It was here that he wrote *Thrawn Janet*, *The Merry Men*, and *The Body Snatcher*, all three of which were first intended as contributions to a volume of supernatural tales in which the tone of terror should be emphasized. It is not difficult for the traveller to imagine how a rainy summer at Pitlochry might turn an author's mind to brooding on the mood of terror, for the aspect of the neighbourhood is wild and dark and haunted; but that Louis saw it sometimes in another mood is indicated by a passage in his *Letters*, in which he describes the locality in these lyric terms: "A little green glen with a burn, a wonderful burn, gold and green and snow-white, singing loud and low in different steps of its career, now pouring over miniature crags, now fretting itself to death in a maze of rocky stairs and pots; never was so sweet a little river. Behind, great purple moorlands reaching to Ben Vrackie."

The next summer, 1882, Stevenson spent a full month at Kingussie, a little mountain resort upon the River Spey, which is situated about forty miles northward from Pitlochry. It can be reached directly from the latter town by rail. "The golden burn that pours and sulks in the den behind Kingussie" is particularly singled out for celebration at the outset of the essay entitled *Pastoral*. The month that Louis passed within hearing of this burn was the last full month that he ever passed in Scotland; and it was here that, according to his habit of heeding the poet's precept that "distance lends enchantment to the view," he wrote

most of the merry tale of *The Treasure of Franchard*, whose scenes are set in the Forest of Fontainebleau.

Kingussie is now overgrown with many monstrous villas of recent erection, and Sir Sidney Colvin has assured me that the place has utterly been spoiled since that summer of 1882 which he spent there in company with Stevenson; but the pilgrim who will wander toward the golf-course through the wooded and secluded den where the lisping burn still "pours and sulks" over the ineffectual stones that seek to dam its course may still catch some echo of that far-off music that made melody in the ears of R. L. S. when he lolled and dreamed by Speyside over thirty years ago.

Chapter Three

ENGLAND

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ENGLAND

I

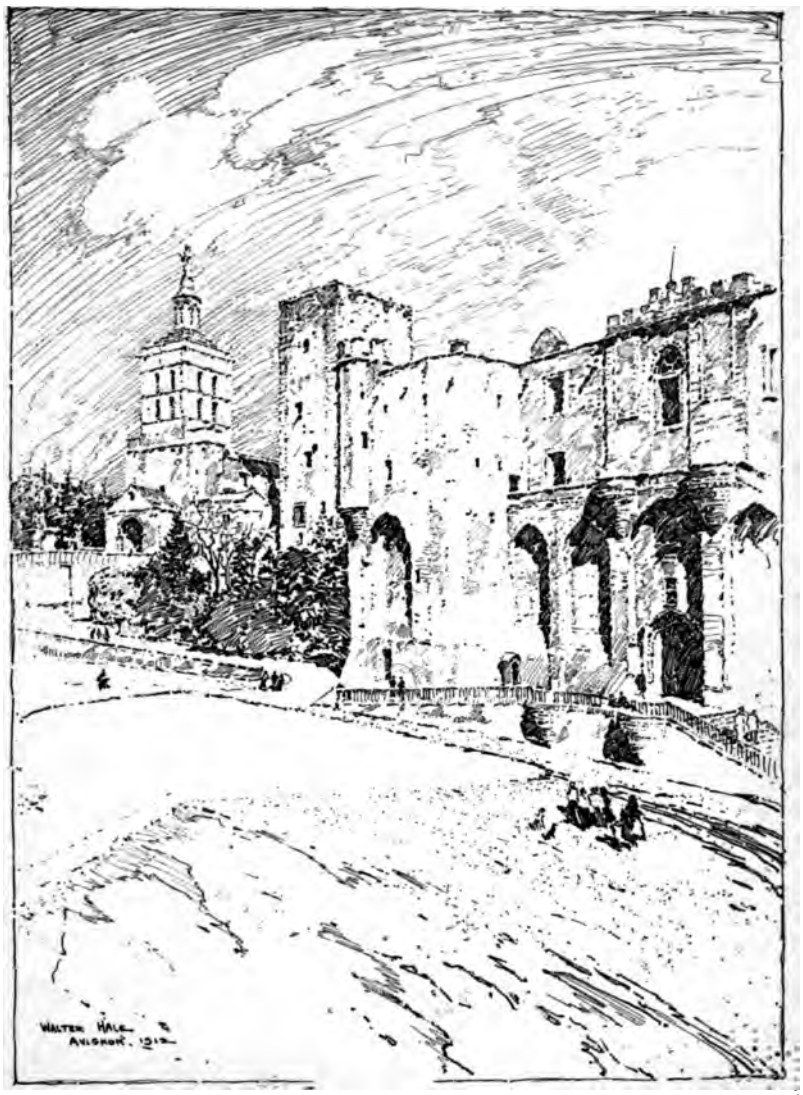
STEVENSON'S attitude toward England was noticeably different from his attitude toward any of the other countries that he lived in. It was the only land in which he felt himself a foreigner. He was always easily at home in France; he made himself quite readily at home in the United States; and, even in the South Sea Islands, he found no difficulty in accustoming himself to conditions of life as far removed as possible from those of his ancestral Scotland. But in England he was never easily and utterly at home. He was living in a land of strangers. Neither the English country nor the English people seemed to belong to him, like the French, the Californian, the Samoan. He was never so consciously and so emphatically Scottish as when he had crossed the border into that very different country that lay only fifty miles to the southward of his native Edinburgh.

He felt no antipathy to England—merely a smiling consciousness of his inability to appreciate and to assimilate it. Other countries he could call his own, but England remained somehow a country of the other people. He never became a part of it; and, in consequence, it never became a part of him. A nameless friend of mine, when he was only twenty-one, wrote (with what seems to me a fine flourish) in his

diary: "Naples is a part of me now; and I am bigger by a city." Louis might have written thus of Paris or of San Francisco. Strangely enough he could never have written in similar terms of London.

His sense of England as a foreign country may be traced back to his childhood. In the autumn of 1863, he passed a single term at a boarding-school kept by a certain Mr. Wyatt in Spring Grove, Isleworth, near London. In after years, his only recollection of this experience was a sense of the essential difference between the English and the Scottish schoolboy. "The boy of the South," he tells us, "seems more wholesome, but less thoughtful; he gives himself to games as to a business, striving to excel, but is not readily transported by imagination; the type remains with me as cleaner in mind and body, more active, fonder of eating, endowed with a lesser and a less romantic sense of life and of the future, and more immersed in present circumstances."

This consciousness of the foreign quality of England and the English became most clearly formulated in Stevenson's mind in the summer of 1873, when he was visiting his cousin, Mrs. Churchill Babington, at Cockfield Rectory, at Sudbury, in Suffolk. In a letter to his mother, sent from Sudbury on July 28th, he said: "I cannot get over my astonishment—indeed, it increases every day—at the hopeless gulf that there is between England and Scotland, and English and Scotch. Nothing is the same; and I feel as strange and outlandish here as I do in France and Germany. Everything by the wayside, in the houses, or about the people, strikes me with an unexpected unfamiliarity: I walk among



AVIGNON—CATHEDRAL AND PALACE OF THE POPES

"I have just read your letter upon the top of the hill beside the church and the castle. . . . I turned back as I went away; the white Christ stood out in strong relief on His brown cross against the blue sky, and the four kneeling angels and lanterns grouped themselves about the foot with a symmetry that was almost laughable." —*Letter of R. L. S. to Mrs. Sitwell.*—Page 85.

surprises, for just where you think you have them, something wrong turns up."

Here, as Sir Sidney Colvin has remarked, we find the germ of the essay called *The Foreigner at Home*, which was published nine years later in the *Cornhill Magazine*. It is a significant fact that when Stevenson, in 1887, collected his autobiographical papers into the volume entitled *Memories and Portraits*, he set this essay in the forefront of the book and caused it to serve as a sort of preface to all that followed. Thereby he forced the reader to realize at once that Scotland, and not England, was the source of those adventures of the mind to be commemorated.

"A Scotchman"—he tells us in this essay—"may tramp the better part of Europe and the United States, and never again receive so vivid an impression of foreign travel and strange lands and manners as on his first excursion into England. The change from a hilly to a level country strikes him with delighted wonder. Along the flat horizon there arise the frequent venerable towers of churches. He sees at the end of airy vistas the revolution of the windmill sails. . . . The warm, habitable age of towns and hamlets, the green, settled, ancient look of the country; the lush hedgerows, stiles and privy pathways in the fields; the sluggish, brimming rivers; chalk and smock-frock; chimes of bells and the rapid, pertly-sounding English speech—they are all new to the curiosity. . . . The sharp edge of novelty wears off; the feeling is scotched, but I doubt whether it is ever killed."

With Stevenson himself, this sense of the novelty of England was never killed; but, oddly enough, instead of

stimulating his mind to a more curious alertness of observation, it led him to relinquish any active effort to look at England as the English do. Some people are most interested by countries that they cannot understand: it was not so with Stevenson. England always baffled him; and, though he often travelled through that foreign country, he never succeeded in seeing it.

This point is especially important, because it explains the notable neglect of England in the works of R. L. S. In his literature of travel, he has devoted entire volumes to France, like *An Inland Voyage* and *Travels with a Donkey;* he has devoted separate volumes to America, like *Across the Plains* and *The Silverado Squatters;* and he has written other volumes to record his voyages among the South Sea Islands: but in his entire lifetime he never published so much as a single essay in celebration of an English scene.

Several of his stories are localized, of necessity, in England; but, in these stories, the background is shadowy and vague. The setting is not so clearly observed, so lucidly delineated, as that of the other tales that are localized in Scotland or America or France or the islands of the far Pacific. Even in his works of fiction, Stevenson writes of England like one who had never seen the country. Oculists inform us that there is a blind spot in the retina; and it is an interesting fact that the seeing eye of Stevenson was only blind when it was turned at England.

II

After Stevenson's death, there was found among his papers an unpublished fragment of an essay on *Cockermouth*

and Keswick; and this fragment was included by Sir Sidney Colvin in the definitive edition of his works. It was written as far back as 1871, when the author was a little less than twenty-one years old. The mere occurrence of the names of two noted English towns in the title of a posthumous essay by R. L. S. would be sufficient to arrest the curiosity; but this curiosity will be increased by a study of the text.

At the very outset of this paper, the reader will encounter a downright exposition by Stevenson himself of his mental habit of relying on his memory to select and to compose subconsciously the essential details of any scene he might be tempted to store up in his mind for subsequent description. There is no other single paragraph in all his writings which affords us such an illuminative indication of his special method of attaining that perspective by which alone description may become a fine art. So important is this paragraph that it must be quoted in entirety:

> Very much as a painter half closes his eyes so that some salient unity may disengage itself from among the crowd of details, and what he sees may thus form itself into a whole; very much on the same principle, I may say, I allow a considerable lapse of time to intervene between any of my little journeyings and the attempt to chronicle them. I cannot describe a thing that is before me at the moment, or that has been before me only a very little while before; I must allow my recollections to get thoroughly strained free from all chaff till nothing be except the pure gold; allow my memory to choose out what is truly memorable by a process of natural selection; and I piously believe that in this way I ensure the Survival of the Fittest. If I make notes for future use, or if I am obliged to write letters during the course of my little excursion, I so interfere with the process that I can never again find out what is worthy of being preserved, or what should be given in full length, what in torso, or what merely in profile.

It is a pity that the foregoing passage should be so little known; for it deserves to be pondered deeply by all students of the craft of writing.

At the outset of Stevenson's account of Cockermouth, we find the earliest of all his written records of the bewildering difference between England and his native country:—"I was lighting my pipe as I stepped out of the inn at Cockermouth, and did not raise my head until I was fairly in the street. When I did so, it flashed upon me that I was in England; the evening sunlight lit up English houses, English faces, an English conformation of street—as it were, an English atmosphere blew against my face. There is nothing perhaps more puzzling (if one thing in sociology can ever really be more unaccountable than another) than the great gulf that is set between England and Scotland—a gulf so easy in appearance, in reality so difficult to traverse."

After this introduction, the reader might logically expect a careful observation of those features of the town by virtue of which it seemed definitively English; but, instead, he will discover that Stevenson chose rather to dismiss this foreign-looking little city without observing it at all. Cockermouth was the birthplace of William Wordsworth, and most tourists who visit the town have Wordsworth in their eye; but there is no indication in this essay that Stevenson was aware that the little winding streets he traversed had been trod by a very great observer who had made that countryside peculiarly his own. How different from this insensibility was the eagerness with which R. L. S. explored and celebrated every small locality in Edinburgh which could be at all connected with the career of the comparatively minor Scottish

poet, Robert Fergusson! Instead of describing Wordsworth's Cockermouth, Stevenson regales us with a detailed account of a casual meeting with a delectable "Canadian Felt Hat Manufacturer," who bore the unpoetic name of Smethurst.

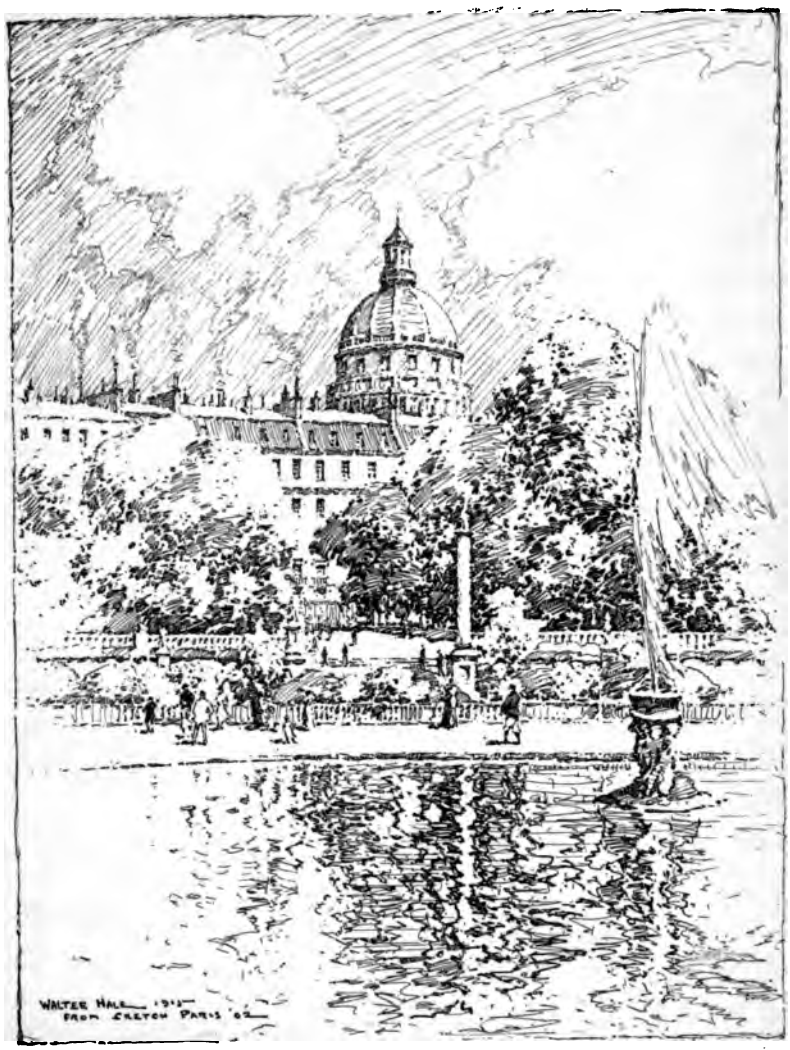
He tells us also that he went unwillingly to Keswick, merely because a waitress in his inn at Cockermouth had summarily insisted on his doing so. There is no mention of Robert Southey in his account of Keswick; but this omission need no longer seem surprising to more traditionally tutored visitors. But the fact is still surprising that Stevenson remained as blind to Keswick as he had been to Cockermouth. There is no more famous view in England than the view of Derwentwater from the wooded little promontory that juts southerly from Keswick into the lapping waters of the lake. Louis leads us to this very point of view: the spot, indeed, may be identified by future travellers as standing within a stone's throw of the monument which has been erected, in recent years, to Ruskin: but instead of describing the panoramic glory of the greatest of the English Lakes, he chooses rather to describe a trio of young girls he met in this idyllic spot, pirouetting in a raffle of wind-driven drapery. His choice is just enough, as a matter of mere art: the charm of the girls appeared to him more potent than the charm of Derwentwater: but the point for us at present to observe is that Louis would have chosen otherwise if the background had been furnished by Loch Lomond or Loch Katrine.

In only one other essay besides this posthumous paper on *Cockermouth and Keswick* does Stevenson mention any particular localities in England. This sole exception to the

rule is the piece entitled *An Autumn Effect*, which first appeared in the *Portfolio* for April and May, 1875, and was not included in his collected works till after his death. In this paper, which celebrates a walking trip through Buckinghamshire, he refers by name to Wendover and Tring, High Wycombe and Great Missenden. None of these towns, however, is carefully observed; the author's purpose, in this paper, is merely to catch the note of a certain moment in the gradual procession of the seasons; and to all intents and purposes, this autumnal picture might have been set, just as effectively, in France.

III

Stevenson's lack of active interest in the look of English towns seems all the more surprising when we remember that, every time he travelled down from Edinburgh to London, he must have passed through such a memorable place as Durham. Many a time, as the train paused at Durham station, he must have looked, over the intervening valley, at that manliest of all cathedrals, seated high upon a hill and guarded by a mediæval castle. Even the most fleeting view of that tremendous hilltop from a railway window is a sight to be remembered ever afterward; but there is no record that Louis ever noticed or remembered it. He was not so blind in Scotland; he was not so blind in France or California; but in England he seems always to have shut his eyes. He never mentions York, another town that he must frequently have traversed on the way from his own northern city of the winds to the more propitiatory cities of the south. York—with its ancient walls and battlemented gates, its quaint and ram-



PARIS—THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS

"Stevenson's reminiscence of these apprentice years in Paris (his *lehrjahre*, to use Goethe's word) is chronicled in the early chapters of *The Wrecker*, wherein we may read of his enthusiasm for the Boul' Miche', and Roussillon wine, and the Luxembourg Gardens, and Lavenue's, and the Rue de Rennes, and the shadowy Hôtel de Cluny."—Page 87.

bling streets, its towered Minster—he never saw, or never cared to see. It was only—so to speak—another town of England; and England was nothing but a foreign country where one never felt at home.

Two features, only, of the English countryside are celebrated with enthusiasm in the works of Stevenson: first, English roads, and second, English taverns. His mind was particularly captivated by the legendary pageant of the Great North Road, over which the tide of travel had swept for many centuries northward to his native Edinburgh. During his residence at Bournemouth, in 1884, Stevenson began a novel which was called *The Great North Road;* and he had written eight chapters before he laid aside the pen in order to prepare *The Dynamiter* for the press. Later in his life he returned to the haunting prospect of this highway and used it as the setting for several of the chapters of *St. Ives.*

Stevenson's love of the homely and hospitable charm of English taverns is also evidenced in *St. Ives,* and in many of his other works of fiction. Several legendary English inns are celebrated in *The Black Arrow;* and in *The Body Snatcher* there is a careful and elaborate description of a tavern called "The George," at Debenham. A vivid picture of tavern life in eighteenth-century England is exhibited in the opening chapters of *Treasure Island,* which are set on the southern shore of Bristol Channel. I can find no indication in the records of the author's life that he was personally acquainted with Bristol and the adjacent seaboard; but, having tramped afoot through that locality myself, I can testify to the essential accuracy of Stevenson's descriptions. Every proper tale

of pirates must begin, as a matter of course, in the immediate environment of Bristol; and an author bent on writing "all the old romance, retold exactly in the ancient way" could easily borrow the traditional setting from his many predecessors.

The Black Arrow is the only one of Stevenson's many tales that attempts to recall the historic past of England; and this book, as the author playfully confessed in the dedication to his wife, must be regarded as his greatest failure in the art of fiction. The action is localized, of necessity, in Tunstall Forest: but the scenery is merely "tushery"—to use the author's word—and cannot be accepted as a serious attempt to paint a picture of provincial England as it appeared in the high and far-off times of Henry VI.

Of one actual English tavern our author appears to have been particularly fond. The inn at Burford Bridge, "with its arbours and green garden and silent, eddying river," is coupled, in *A Gossip on Romance*, with the Hawes Inn at Queensferry as a place that is pregnant with potential narrative. "The inn at Burford Bridge—though it is known already as the place where Keats wrote some of his *Endymion* and Nelson parted from his Emma—still seems to wait the coming of the appropriate legend. Within these ivied walls, behind these old green shutters, some further business smoulders, waiting for its hour. . . . I have lived at the Hawes and the Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place. . . . The man or the hour had not yet come; but . . . some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, [shall] rattle with his whip on the green shutters of the inn at Burford."

Louis lived twice at this haunted and historic tavern—in April, 1878, and again in April, 1882. On both occasions his immediate motive was to visit George Meredith, whose home, near the neighbouring hamlet of Dorking, was—in the inspired phrase of Sir James Matthew Barrie—"the throne of letters in this country." On the first occasion—being far enough from London and from Paris—Louis wrote several of the stories in the *New Arabian Nights;* but, unfortunately for posterity, he never subsequently tried a rattle at the shutters of the inn at Burford Bridge. This tavern may still be visited by literary pilgrims. A tall cliff overlooks it from the rear, and there is a little wash of water in the foreground. The house has been "improved" and "modernized"; but it is not difficult to imagine away the renovations and to recall it as it must have looked when Louis lived there.

Toward the end of *The Wrecker* there is a lovely description of an imaginary English town called Stalbridge; but it is characteristic of R. L. S. that this locality should be described from the point of view of a foreign visitor—in this case, an American. The "Carthew Arms," at Stalbridge-le-Carthew, is a typical English tavern of the kind that Louis loved; but his shadowy account of Stalbridge Minster is the only passage in all his work that suggests to us that he ever felt and understood the charm of any of the great cathedrals which make the little sea-girt isle of England a Mecca of innumerable pilgrims from innumerable lands.

IV

Stevenson's almost utter lack of interest in London is more remarkable than his apparent insensibility to the visual as-

pects of the English countryside. He made many fleeting visits to the capital—especially during the impressionable decade of his twenties; but he was never allured to make any deliberate effort to explore the most intricately interesting of all the cities of the modern world. Any American college youth who has spent two weeks in London with a guide-book has seen more of the city than Louis ever noticed and observed in his entire lifetime. He knew every stone of Edinburgh; he knew both modern and mediæval Paris like a book; he could have drawn from memory a map of San Francisco; but it never seems to have occurred to him that it might be interesting to study St. Bartholomew's the Great or to visit the sacred sanctuary of St. Saviour's, Southwark.

There is such a thing as Thackeray's London or the London of Dickens; but there is no such thing as Stevenson's London. Unlike most of the British novelists of the nineteenth century, he has left us no picture and no vision of the capital. To Stevenson, London meant merely the Savile Club; "the Monument," as he picturesquely called the official residence of Sir Sidney Colvin in the east wing of the British Museum; the home of Mr. Edmund Gosse; a few Bohemian restaurants in the district of Soho; and the more frequented streets immediately adjacent to Trafalgar Square. He may, perhaps, have visited such a famous haunt of tourists as The Temple; but, if so, we have no record of the fact.

Most of Stevenson's friends had interests in London. He went there to see them, not to see the city. The experience was a little—let us say—like meeting an old schoolmate on the doorstep of the Mosque at Cordoba and therefore never

entering the Mosque. All he cared about in London was the talk and talkers of the town—the *Talk and Talkers* he has celebrated in two of his most brilliant essays.

He is still remembered as a formerly familiar figure at the Savile Club. This club, which takes its name from its original house at No. 15 Savile Row, is now situated in Piccadilly, opposite the Green Park. More than any other club in London, it approximates the atmosphere of The Players in New York. Most of the members are actively engaged or eagerly interested in one or another of the arts; and this mutual interest in the things that count is accepted, in lieu of any formal introduction, as a cue for conversation within the precincts of the club.

When the Savile Club was founded, in 1869, Sir Sidney Colvin was among the men most active in its organization; and the fact is pointed out to recent members that the initials of the club are the same as those of this prince of gentlemen and scholars. Proposed by Sir Sidney, Stevenson was elected to the Savile after only six weeks of probation, on June 3d, 1874; and thereafter the club became his home in London.

It has been a pleasant privilege of the present writer to be received as an Honorary Member of the Savile Club, and to meet many of the men who still remember Stevenson. After luncheon, it is the custom to retire for coffee and cigars to the billiard-room—an L-shaped hall with leather cushions, behind the dining-room. Here, in the comfortable atmosphere of after-table talk, I have listened to many tales of Louis, in his black shirt and velvet jacket, gesticulating eagerly and shaking his long and unkempt hair, while he

made the little circle in the midst of which he talked a momentary centre of the universe.

It is significant, however, that Stevenson's essays on *Talk and Talkers* are the only ones that may be said to have been inspired by his experience of London. To him, the Savile Club was more important than the city. He was right, of course, from his particular point of view; but this point of view was scarcely to be expected from one who was destined to become a great novelist.

Stevenson never used London as a setting for his works of fiction except when the exigencies of the narrative demanded a background that was vast and vague. He knew nothing, and cared nothing, about the memorable history of the great metropolis. He has set a tale in mediæval Paris, and minutely explored the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century in two historical romances; but he never mentions London except in stories that are contemporary with himself. His London—if he may be said to have a London—has no past; nor is it even clearly and distinctly drawn from the point of view of an appreciator in the present.

The *New Arabian Nights* are set, for the most part, in contemporary London, because a matter-of-fact and strictly modern setting would most accentuate the ironic quality of the fantastic in the narratives themselves; but the localities of London that are specifically mentioned might all be visited by an enterprising tourist within a single hour. Leicester Square, Rupert Street, Soho, Trafalgar Square, and the little streets that run riverward through the Adelphi district from the Strand, are so well-known to every traveller

THE HEART OF THE LATIN QUARTER—ACROSS THE PLACE DE RENNES FROM LAVENUE'S

"Mr. Will H. Low, to whom *The Wrecker* was dedicated, has informed us that nearly all the incidents recorded in those scenes which are localized in the Latin Quarter were recalled from actual occurrences in Stevenson's Parisian days." —Page 87.

that it seems scarcely worth while for Stevenson to have pointed them out at all.

Even when he mentions such familiar localities as these, his memory is not always accurate. For instance, any tourist will notice that the parapet of Trafalgar Square is scarcely high enough to insure the instant death of any one who might be flung summarily to the flagstones below. "Box Court" is merely a fictitious name; but the traveller (under a pretence of seeking rooms) may still explore the Craven Hotel, in Craven Street, which was selected by the author as the scene of the misadventures of Silas Q. Scuddamore with the Saratoga trunk. This hotel is very dingy, very musty, and a little tragical; and those who visit it to-day will scent a hint of secret corpses behind doorways.

From a single phrase of *Markheim*, in which we are told that the hero longs "to plunge into a bath of London multitudes," we infer that the shop of the murdered dealer is situated in the capital. Otherwise, this greatest of all Stevenson's short-stories might be conceived to happen—like the tales of Edgar Allan Poe—"out of space, out of time."

I have often wondered why the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was set in London instead of Edinburgh. Utterson is a very Scottish sort of lawyer; Lanyon is a very Scottish sort of doctor; and the metaphysical speculation that allures Dr. Jekyll to his doom is decidedly more Scottish than English. Furthermore, the tale might most appropriately be conceived as happening among the gloomy doorways and mysterious *wynds* that undermine the tall, decaying *lands* which darkly overhang the High Street of

Edinburgh. Possibly Louis may have felt that Mr. Hyde could lose himself more easily among the shifting crowds of a vaster and less centred city. It is more difficult to hunt a villain down in London than in Edinburgh.

But the London that hovers in the background of this grisly fable is nothing but a vacancy of lamp-lit streets or else a crowded city quenched in fog. No reader of this story who has never visited the capital knows any more of London than he knew before he read it. We are told that Lanyon lives in Cavendish Square. There is nothing notable in that: it is a square of doctors. We are told that Utterson lives in Gaunt Street: but there is no such street in London. Hyde has lodgings in Soho: he would have, of course, since the district is comparatively disreputable. Dr. Jekyll lives in an unnamed square, the description of which seems to indicate vaguely that it is some such place as Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is in the Regent's Park that Dr. Jekyll suffers his involuntary transformation into the loathsome body of Mr. Hyde; and Hyde subsequently drives to an hotel in Portland Street. The name of London is mentioned only twice or thrice in the entire narrative; and none of the localities enumerated is described with any particularity of observation. Here is, indeed, a tale of London that might have been set, without the slightest loss of emphasis, in any other of the major cities of the world.

V

The only place in England that Stevenson at any time could fairly call his home was Bournemouth, where he lived from September, 1884, to August, 1887. Bournemouth may

be described, in his own phrase, as an "uncharted wilderness of villas" scattered over the hills which flank the valley of the Bourne—a peaceful little river which at this point slinks into the sea. It is a popular wintering-place for invalids. The salubrity of its climate is due mainly to the pine woods by which it is environed. The finest villas are in a suburb to the west, which is known as Branksome Park. Here the houses are hidden from each other by a thick entanglement of trees; and a luxuriant growth of rhododendrons, and several species of exotic-looking palms, afford a hint of the tropical to woods that seem a little out of place on the seaboard of the English Channel. The sandstone cliffs which fortify the forest from the sea are gashed at frequent intervals into deep ravines, or "chines." These sheltered gorges have an inland look, like little mountain valleys; though, close by, upon the beach, the sea is forever rustling and whispering along the sand.

Though Louis spent three years in Bournemouth, he never looked about him in the place itself nor visited the points of interest in the adjacent countryside. Christchurch, to the east, and Wimborne, to the west, are rich in Norman and Early English architecture; but ill-health confined him for the most part to the house, and on the rare occasions when he ventured out of doors he does not seem to have felt the call of mediæval minsters.

Bournemouth is never referred to in his works, except in the first two chapters of *The Wrong Box*, where Branksome woods and the East Station of the town are mentioned by name, but without particular description. These chapters were first drafted by Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, who had

been to school in Bournemouth before the family decided to settle there; and it was probably from his incentive, instead of that of his stepfather, that the name of the place was perpetuated in the extravagant tale which was the first product of their collaboration.

From September to November, 1884, the Stevensons occupied a lodging on the West Cliff called Wensleydale; from November, 1884, to April, 1885, they rented a furnished house in Branksome Park, named Bonallie Towers. Finally, in the Easter season of 1885, they moved into a house of their own, on the brink of Alum Chine, which had been purchased by Thomas Stevenson and presented as a special gift to his daughter-in-law.

This was the only house, except Vailima, which Stevenson could ever call his own. He renamed it Skerryvore, in memory of that deep-sea lighthouse, planted nearly thirty miles due westward of the Isle of Earraid, which was erected by his uncle, Alan Stevenson, in the six years from 1838 to 1844, and is still considered one of the most notable achievements of his "family of engineers." The christening was consecrated in a poem, which appears as Number XXXIV of *Underwoods:*

> For love of lovely words, and for the sake
> Of those, my kinsmen and my countrymen,
> Who early and late in the windy ocean toiled
> To plant a star for seamen, where was then
> The surfy haunt of seals and cormorants:
> I, on the lintel of this cot, inscribe
> The name of a strong tower.

Skerryvore is a two-story villa of yellow brick, overgrown with ivy, and capped with many high-pitched gables of blue

slate. It turns its back to the road, and overlooks a garden which scrambles over the edge of the ravine. When Stevenson settled here, in a house of his own, he experienced for the first time that sense of proprietorship which was destined to be developed, on a larger scale, in his later years at Vailima. In several of the poems in *Underwoods*—notably Numbers V, XVII, XXXIV, XXXV, and XXXVI, all of which are set at Skerryvore—he voices a sentiment of house and home —a sense of the essential poetry of feeling settled in some little corner of the world that is utterly one's own—that marks an interesting departure from the mere Bohemian vagabondage of his earlier years.

VI

The period of Stevenson's residence at Bournemouth affords us the most available opportunity for investigating two points which are of the utmost importance toward any final appreciation of his career. The first is his attitude toward money; and the second is the effect, upon his work, of his habitual ill-health.

It is commonly assumed that Stevenson was required to encounter and to conquer greater difficulties than those which have opposed the progress of the majority of other writers who have toiled for twenty years to teach themselves the delicate and lovely art of setting words alluringly together. This assumption is, however, contradicted by the facts.

In the first place, Louis never had to earn his living. He could afford, through all the years of his apprenticeship, to take his time. He never had to write against the ticking of

the clock, to get an article to press in time to pay the rent and pay the butcher. Other men have toiled all day, throughout their twenties, as editors, or publishers, or teachers, and have subsequently toiled all night at their chosen and belovèd craft of writing. Other men have taught themselves to write with dignity and beauty in tired hours desperately snatched from a dull routine of uncongenial labour, devoted gladly to the task of keeping their parents from starvation and giving an education to their brothers and their sisters. Many of this uncomplaining legion of the tried and true have succeeded finally in writing well; and the public that has lauded their success has never been told of all the dreary years behind it.

Of this quite ordinary burden, Louis never knew the heavy and the weary weight. It was not till 1883, when he was nearly thirty-three years of age, that he ever earned as much as fifteen hundred dollars in a single year; and it was not till he was thirty-seven that his annual earnings, from his own unaided efforts, ever exceeded the sum of two thousand dollars. Nevertheless, he had ventured, at the age of twenty-nine, to marry a woman twelve years older than himself, with two children in their teens.

Through all this time he was supported by his father. Thomas Stevenson not only gave Skerryvore to Mrs. Stevenson; he also gave, and gave continuously, the current funds that were required for the maintenance of his son and of his son's adopted family.

This point is by no means mentioned in reproach. We know from certain passages in the *Lay Morals* that Louis was keenly conscious that he owed a special debt to destiny

MORET—THE TOWN GATE

In the essay on *Fontainebleau*, Stevenson said, "Nemours and Moret, for all they are so picturesque, have been little visited by painters. They are, indeed, too populous; they have manners of their own, and might resist the drastic process of colonization."—Page 90.

because he had been exempted from the common heritage of daily labour. Whenever he needed money, he wrote to his father; but he was fully aware of the special obligation to use the leisure thus so easily acquired to the best advantage of his craft. Though an only child—and, in a sense, a spoiled child—of independent parents, he remained at all times a good and faithful servant of his art. This is greatly to his credit; but, on the other hand, it is unsound to assume that his way was harder than that of the majority of other writers.

When Louis somewhat rashly attempted to earn his own living in the winter of 1879–1880 [he was at that time twenty-nine years old], the attempt resulted in disastrous failure. Not only was he reduced at once to abject poverty; but his work underwent an appreciable falling-off in art, and his spirits, till then so buoyant, became tragically melancholy. He failed at every point—in business, in art, in spirit; and from this failure he was rescued only by the renewal of his allowance from his father.

The only other time when he had to work for money was in the last two years of his life. He was now earning twenty thousand dollars a year; but it was not enough. He had paid out what was for him an unprecedented sum of money in order to establish himself at Vailima; the estate was exceedingly expensive, and the effort to meet his unusual financial obligations plunged him into that final melancholy which is so evident in his later letters from Vailima. He nearly died when he tried to earn his living in San Francisco; and it is clearly indicated in Sir Sidney Colvin's comments on the later letters that he suffered severely from overwork when he had to earn his living at Vailima.

But apart from these two experiences, pitiable and terrible as they are, Stevenson was never called upon to feel the grip of poverty, to wrestle with it as the dauntless Hebrew wrestled with the angel, and to fling it from him with a silent, unselfconscious smile.

Louis is lauded as a hero, because, despite all handicaps, he did his work and did it well. Being myself a worshipper of heroes—for hero-worship is one of the few things that make our mortal life more worthy than it seems—I am happy to remove my hat and cheer with the majority. But let us not ignore the fact that, in one respect at least, the work of Stevenson was made more easy than that of many a nameless and unnoted literary artist—true to his craft and true to his ideal of service—who is toiling against more desperate difficulties in New York or London at the present hour.

VII

There remains to be considered the question of Stevenson's ill-health. It is a curious fact that posterity has made a hero out of Louis, not because he always wrote well, but because he often wrote in bed. To write well is a great achievement: never to write badly is indeed an intimation of immortality—an accomplishment so rare and noble as to call for the erection of monuments and the dedication of shrines: but when a man has done so big a thing as this, it seems impertinent and trivial for the public to consider whether he did it in bed or out of bed.

Stevenson's health was never, at any other time, so bad as during the three years of his residence at Bournemouth. He was frequently in imminent danger of death from pul-

monary hemorrhages. Often his right arm was bound up in a sling, to impede him from his habit of violent gesticulation. Frequently he was forbidden to speak, and could communicate with his family only by signs and written words. For many days together he was forced to lie in bed. Yet, during this period, he wrote *Kidnapped*, the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Olalla*, and *Markheim;* he finished *Prince Otto*, *The Dynamiter*, and the *Child's Garden of Verses;* he collaborated with William Ernest Henley on *Beau Austin*, *Admiral Guinea*, and *Macaire;* he prepared the *Memoir of Fleeming Jenkin*, half a dozen of his finest essays, and most of *Underwoods;* he began *The Great North Road;* he made his studies for an unwritten *Life of Wellington;* and he undertook many other literary labours. This great achievement—fully worthy in itself of hero-worship, since good and faithful labour is the most inspiriting spectacle in life—has been trumpeted as particularly laudable because it was accomplished by a man who might have died in mid-career at any hour.

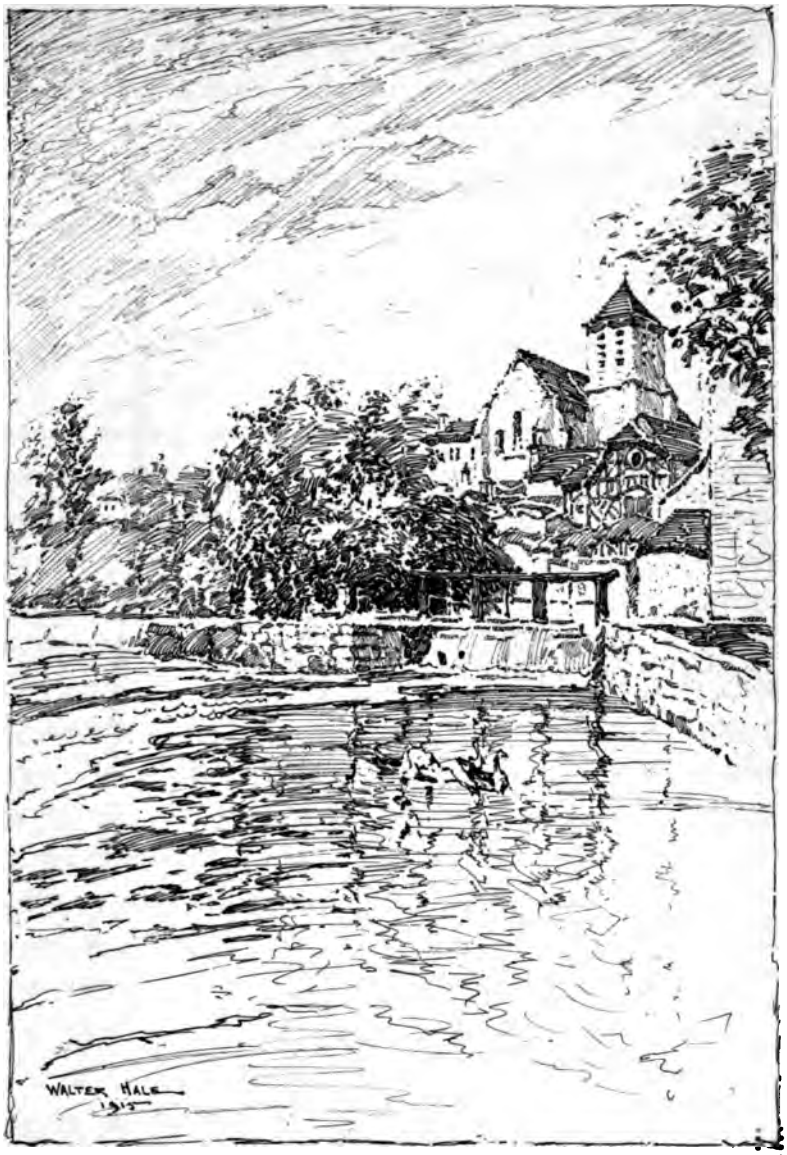
Louis might have died in Bournemouth. The fact is that he did not die. And the question remains whether the imminence of death made it especially difficult for him to do his work. To this important question, the facts require that a negative answer should be returned.

On one occasion, when I had examined the career of Stevenson month by month and almost week by week, I discovered that he always worked most and worked best in those seasons when he was confined to his bed. Whenever he was well, he played and talked; whenever he was ill, he worked and wrote. From this observation of recorded facts, I was

led to the logical surmise that the particular nature of his malady was such that, instead of impeding him, it helped him to devote his best attention to his art. This was the starting-point of an investigation which led to a careful questioning of many of his most intimate friends and to a consultation with the most noted of all the physicians who, at any time, had taken charge of him.

The first result of this investigation was the discovery that although Louis might have bled to death at any moment if he had ruptured an important artery, his malady was seldom painful and was rarely permitted to depress his spirits. The imminence of sudden death, as R. L. S. himself has told us in *Aes Triplex*, is never regarded seriously by those it threatens; and many specialists in lung diseases have assured me that their patients are ordinarily more spirited than men who are completely well. It seems to be established that the mind of Stevenson was more buoyant, more active, and more eager, when he was confined to his bed than when he was permitted to roam abroad in public. For one thing, his mind was of necessity disengaged from the normal interruption of many matters of minor interest, and was flung back into an enormous vacancy of leisure which it was called upon to render habitable by its own activity. For another thing, this disassociating process was never impeded by the intrusion of pain.

Stevenson himself has stated in his letters that never, in all his life, did he experience any sense of pain so acute as that which is reputed to arise from an ordinary toothache. One wonders whether he could have done his work so well under the dagger-thrusts of agony as he did it under the



MONTIGNY-SUR-LOING

"Stevenson was a great walker in these days, and explored not only the Forest of Fontainebleau itself, but all the towns of the adjacent countryside. The traveller who visits any of these entrancing little towns will find himself walking in the footsteps of R. L. S. They have been described for all time in the paper entitled *Fontainebleau* and the paper entitled *Forest Notes*."—Page 90.

painless imminence of death. I have no desire to diminish the popular conception of his heroism. My desire is merely to define the nature of that heroism, and to emphasize the usually disregarded fact that, when he did his work in bed, the odds were just as often for him as against him.

In that interesting Bournemouth period, when Stevenson did so much of his best work at a time when his health was undeniably at its lowest ebb, no other of his friends saw so much of him as Mr. Henry James. For this reason, I resolved, some years ago, to inquire of Mr. James whether or not it was easier, instead of harder, for Louis to work when he was ill than when he was comparatively well. At a conference which took place in the autumn of 1910, Mr. James, in reply to a series of direct questions, assured me (1) that Stevenson was never in pain, (2) that his mind was more easily active than usual when he was afflicted with pulmonary hemorrhages, and (3) that his consequent seclusion from the outside world actually helped him to perform his labours, since at such times he was defended from all interruptions.

These conclusions are my own; and, in stating that the testimony of Mr. James has aided me in making up my mind about this matter, I have no intention to burden his more ample shoulders with any responsibility for these assertions. On the other hand, Stevenson's step-daughter, Mrs. Salisbury Field, has said to me, "He did not burden his friends with complaints of his ill-health, and the fact that Mr. James thinks he did not suffer shows more than anything else Mr. Stevenson's courage and unselfishness."

My own feeling is that Louis was a hero because he was

that rare thing, a great artist, and that rarer thing, a great man. I remember at this moment a conversation with Cummy in regard to the memorial tablet by Saint-Gaudens that has been erected in St. Giles's Church in Edinburgh. I admired it as a work of art, thinking mainly of "the god-like sculptor"; but Cummy stamped her foot, and swept the thing away with an impatient gesture. "Why will they be showing Master Lou in bed?" she said. "I didn't love him because he was a sickly child!" . . .

VIII

When Stevenson left Bournemouth, he left England and his native isle forever. He was only thirty-six; and the friends who saw him off on the steamship, *Ludgate Hill*, which sailed from London for New York on August 21st, 1887, little realized that they were looking for the last time on his face. It was his destiny to sail beyond the sunset and the baths of all the western stars until he died. He had seen little of England that seemed worthy of remembrance when he was actively observing other lands; but he had done much of his best work in that alien but hospitable country, so actually near, so really far, from the land he always loved and longed for as his home.

Chapter Four

FRANCE

CHAPTER FOUR

FRANCE

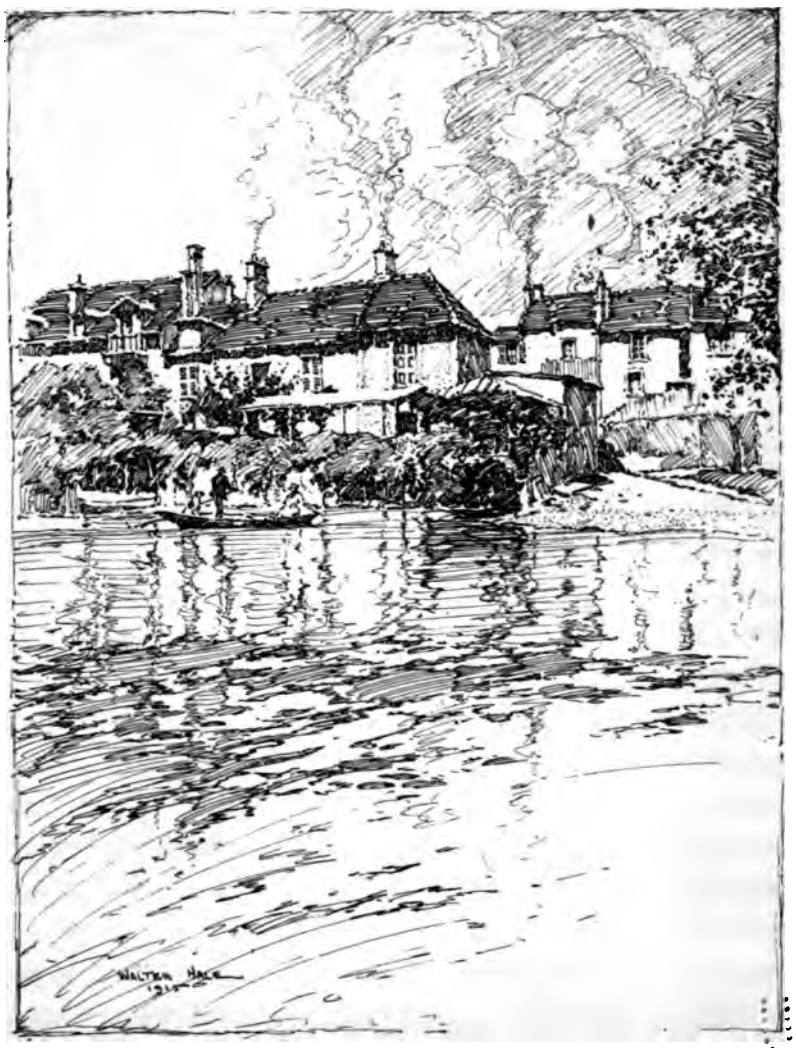
I

STEVENSON lived more freely, more fully, and more happily in France than in any other country.

The word *atmosphere* is used in two senses—to indicate an essence absorbed by the lungs, and to indicate an essence absorbed by the spirit. In both senses, the atmosphere of France agreed with Stevenson. He sought health, from first to last, in many climes; but nowhere in Europe could he find it except in sunny France. In windy Scotland and in foggy England, he was condemned to linger for long periods in the Land of Counterpane; but in France he paddled a canoe and travelled with a donkey. He worked best when he was ill, but he played best when he was well; and Stevenson was most himself in play-time. Those who know how to play are rarer and more precious than those who know how to work; and to meet Stevenson at his best (if one could make the clock tick backward and eliminate uncounted yesterdays) one would choose to meet him at Fontainebleau or at Hyères. In these places he was well, and could lead a normal life; and there is nothing in the spirit of the man that could make one wish to meet him as an invalid. Concerning the state of Stevenson's health in France, the most valuable testimony is that of Mr. Will H. Low, who first met

him in Paris in the spring of 1875. In that charming book, *A Chronicle of Friendships*, Mr. Low has said: "At this time, and during the three years that followed, I was never conscious that he was more than a little less robust than most of us were. . . . At Barbizon he was among the foremost in our long walks over the plains or in the forest of Fontainebleau, and in the summers of 1876–77 at Grez, where he led a semi-amphibious life on and in the River Loing, he never seemed ill, and as youth is not solicitous on questions of health, it never occurred to us that his slender frame encased a less robust constitution than that of others."

But in a deeper sense the atmosphere of France agreed with Stevenson. France is the most civilized of European countries. It is the mark of civilized people that they are able to understand you and to leave you alone; it is only the semi-civilized who endeavour to convert you to their way of thinking. Though Louis loved his native Edinburgh with a passionate, abiding love, he was never comfortable there after he had arrived at what may conveniently be called his years of indiscretion. To love Edinburgh is one thing—and any one must love at sight that queenliest of cities—but to love Edinburgh society is something very different. As soon as the traveller settles in Edinburgh, his landlady will endeavour to amend his manners and to reform his religion. The semi-civilized inhabitants of that superb and haunting city can never understand you and will never leave you alone. The watchword of Edinburgh is Conformity. But Louis was that rare thing, an individual—that is to say, a person capable of thinking his own thoughts,



MONTIGNY-SUR-LOING

"The *Envoy* to *Underwoods* was inspired by the hospitable aspect of Mr. Will H. Low's little garden at Montigny-sur-Loing." Stevenson said of it, in the essay on *Fontainebleau*, "Montigny has been somewhat strangely neglected. I never knew it inhabited but once, when Will H. Low installed himself there with a barrel of piquette, and entertained his friends in a leafy trellis above the weir, in sight of the green country, and to the music of the falling water. It was a most airy, quaint, and pleasant place of residence, just too rustic to be stagey."—Page 91.

feeling his own feelings, and living his own life, without imitating those around him.

For an individual—as the type has been defined—the worst of all cities to grow up in is Edinburgh, and the best of all cities to grow up in is Paris. In Edinburgh, where everything is forbidden, the tendency of youths of genius is to burst their bars, and—to put the matter very frankly—to dash headlong to hell—where, at least, the company shall be neither respectable nor hypocritical. But in Paris, where nothing is forbidden, youths of genius may freely test their wings, without beating them against prison bars in desperation, and may learn, in their own God-given way, to think, to feel, to live.

When Louis was floundering through the stormy seas of adolescence, Edinburgh never understood him. This is the reason—once more to put the matter very frankly—why, for a time, he hovered very near to dashing headlong to hell. But in Paris, the city of the free, he recovered his moral sanity. Instead of a conspiracy of citizens solemnly and hypocritically chanting "Thou shalt not," he found a civilized society that permitted him to think out for himself the more profound, important problem of "Thou shalt."

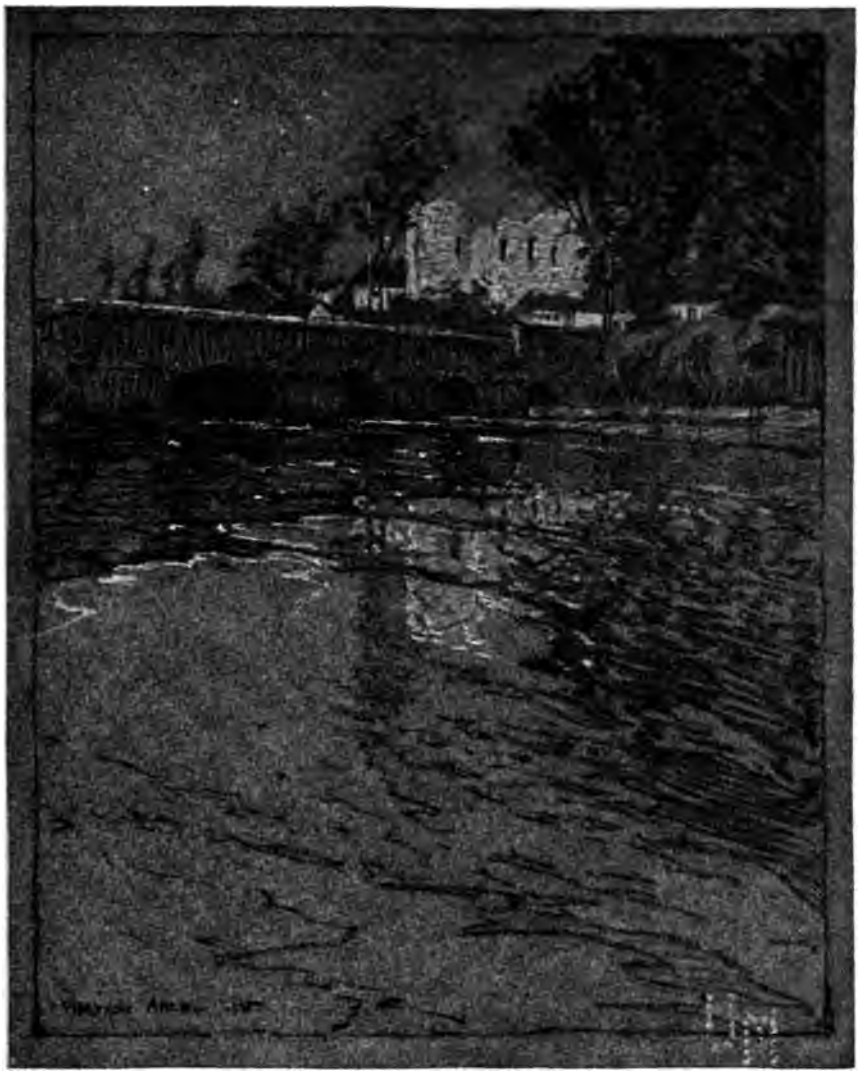
France is the second home of all the artists of the world. She teaches them to do their work by leaving them alone. They may dress as they choose, think as they choose, talk as they choose, act as they choose—provided only that they shall study to express, in their own way, the best that has been given them to say. In the atmosphere of France, Stevenson could breathe and spread his wings; and not the least

never forget the account of this first meeting with R. L. S. which Mr. Lang once gave me in his home in Kensington.

Now that Mr. Lang has left us [to go golfing on Elysian hills, one likes to think], it may no longer seem ill-mannered for a younger man, who was no less fond of him than those who knew him better, to record the curious manner of his conversation. Mr. Lang was singularly inarticulate in talk. His utterance was discontinuous and jerky, and enunciated with an amiable growl. His speech was like his handwriting; and anybody who ever received a letter from him will know what that means. A letter from Mr. Lang looked as if a fly had dipped its feet in ink and ambled aimlessly over the paper: when he invited you to luncheon, you had to hand the note to an expert in chirography to determine whether the appointment were for Tuesday or for Thursday. In speaking, he seemed less to talk than to bark and grumble; but you loved him for this as you might love a noble-hearted St. Bernard. He did not talk in sentences, he growled in phrases. When another man would have said, "Will you have a cigarette?" Mr. Lang said, "Cigarettes—over there." Instead of asking you to be seated, he would grumble, "Chair," and wave his hand.

The reader is to use this as a sort of stage-direction in reading Mr. Lang's account of his first glimpse of Stevenson. I jotted it down from memory, in the London Underground, immediately after Mr. Lang had told it to me.

"Mentone. Promenade. Saw him coming. Didn't like him. Long cape. Long hair. Queer hat. Damned queer. Hands: white, bony, beautiful. Didn't like the cape. Didn't like the hair. Looked like a damned æsthete. Never liked



THE BRIDGE AT GREZ--MOONLIGHT

"I have been three days at a place called Grez, a pretty and very melancholy village on the plain. A low bridge, with many arches choked with sedge; green fields of white and yellow water-lilies, etc."—*R. L. S. in a letter to his mother.*
—Page 91.

æsthetes. Can't stand them. Talked well. Saw that. Still seemed another æsthete Colvin had discovered. Didn't like him. Didn't like him at all. . . . Later—oh, yes—but I needn't tell you that. Didn't like him at first. Took time."

But really to read this stenographic record, the reader must imagine something more—the great heart and deep humanity of Mr. Lang, the sense he always gave you of saying little because there was so much to say, the curious fascination of the pauses in his grumbling utterance, and the indefinable something that made you count the hours until you might be privileged to talk with him again.

The most wholesome thing about this anecdote is that it punctures the illusion that everybody liked Louis Stevenson at sight—an illusion which has been fostered by all of his biographers. Mr. Lang "didn't like him at all" at Mentone, and Mr. Lang was one of those who loved him best in later years. Any student who has picked up carefully the trail of Stevenson must have met many other people whose first impression of him was unfavourable. The truth of the matter seems to be this: Louis was so emphatically individual, so distinctly different from the ordinary run of people, that nobody who met him for the first time could dismiss him with indifference. It was necessary at once to like him or dislike him. But, charming as he was to those who recognized and knew him, he was by no means charming to everybody. The long hair, the black shirt, the velveteen jacket, the flowing cape, dissuaded many men [and one can hardly blame them] from seeing at once how real he was.

And, now that we are glancing for the moment at the legendary Stevenson, another illusion may as well be punc-

tured. This is the illusion that he understood children, and that children loved him at sight. As a matter of fact, Louis belonged to the considerable and not unworthy class of men who always feel uncomfortable in the presence of children who are very young. He didn't know what to do with them. He could write immortal poems in reminiscence of his own childhood; but he couldn't make a baby smile. Small children didn't like him; because he seemed queer.

The facts distilled into the foregoing paragraph were told to me by Mr. Edmund Gosse. As the father of three children who were in their infancy during the years when Stevenson was most frequently a visitor to his house, Mr. Gosse must be regarded as an authority on the subject of Stevenson's relations with the very young. On the other hand, I must hasten to add that both Mr. Lloyd Osbourne and Mr. Austin Strong have assured me that Louis was the best of all playmates for boys in their teens. The truth of the matter seems to be this: boys he understood, but young children nearly always set him out of countenance.

IV

During the course of his second journey to Mentone, when Louis was "ordered south" in the autumn of 1873, he paused at Avignon; and this fact—for those who love him—increases the attraction of this famous town for travellers to-day. The very name of Avignon is like a chiming of sweet bells upon the ear; and the mediæval city of the Popes is worthy of her name.

From Avignon, Louis wrote to Mrs. Sitwell—the guardian of his growing years—"I have just read your letter upon

the top of the hill beside the church and the castle. The whole air was filled with sunset and the sound of bells; and I wish I could give you the least notion of the *southernness* and *Provençality* of all that I saw. . . . I went away across the Rhone and up the hill on the other side that I might see the town from a distance. Avignon followed me with its bells and drums and bugles; for the old city has no equal for multitude of such noises. Crossing the bridge and seeing the brown turbid water foam and eddy about the piers, one could scarce believe one's eyes when one looked down upon the stream and saw the smooth blue mirroring tree and hill. . . . You cannot picture to yourself anything more steeped in hard bright sunshine than the view from the hill. The immovable inky shadow of the old bridge on the fleeting surface of the yellow river seemed more solid than the bridge itself. . . . I turned back as I went away; the white Christ stood out in strong relief on His brown cross against the blue sky, and the four kneeling angels and lanterns grouped themselves about the foot with a symmetry that was almost laughable."

This letter may seem of little interest to the majority of readers; but it will mean much to that elected few who have been to Avignon, and have lingered, like Louis, on the summit of the Rocher des Doms, to watch the sunset tinge with glory that broken bridge, whereon, to strains of music that are unforgettable, "l'on y danse, tout en rond."

Nearly nineteen years later, when Stevenson was living in Samoa, he began a novel, called *The Young Chevalier*, of which the scenes were set in Avignon. He wrote only a chapter and a half of this projected work; but, the first

chapter is sufficient to dispel the strange illusion that Louis knew nothing about women. The truth of this particular matter may be stated in a single sentence: he knew so much about women that he was afraid, until he was over forty, to let himself go upon the subject. But, from the point of view of the traveller on the trail of Stevenson, the chief interest of the fragment of *The Young Chevalier* is the evidence it gives of how strong a hold a town like Avignon could take upon the memory of such an artist. He had not visited the place for nearly twenty years when he began to write this story; yet he saw it still as clearly as if he had only gone "across the Rhone and up the hill on the other side that he might see the town from a distance." Any place which had, at any time, impressed him he could always recall with ease. He forgot details; but details are of no importance to the artist. He remembered the essence and the sting.

V

It was on his return from Mentone in April, 1874, that Louis met his cousin, Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson, in Paris, and really saw the city for the first time. Bob was a painter; and Louis was introduced at once to that Paris of the painters which is—for youth, at least—the best of all the Parises there are.

This Paris, which Louis learned to know and love, was not the Paris of the great boulevards, laid out (appropriately enough) by a baron whose un-Gallic name was Haussmann; but the real Paris—the Paris of the *rive gauche*, the Paris of freedom and adventure, the Paris where (in the immortal phrase of Dante) a youth may learn to "make himself eternal."

For many years thereafter, Stevenson became a frequently recurrent visitor to the *Quartier Latin*. This Paris [the best of all, as has been said] he knew much better and loved much more than any phase of London. He could wear his queer clothes, and think his queer thoughts, and feel his queer feelings, and pursue his queer business of learning how to write; and the fellows he encountered every day could understand him, and knew enough to leave him alone.

His reminiscence of these apprentice years in Paris [his *lehrjahre*, to use Goethe's word] is chronicled in the early chapters of *The Wrecker*, wherein we may read of his enthusiasm for the Boul' Miche', and Roussillon wine, and the Luxembourg Gardens, and the Observatory, and Lavenue's, and the Rue de Rennes, and the shadowy Hôtel de Cluny. Mr. Will H. Low, to whom this book was dedicated, has informed us that nearly all the incidents recorded in those scenes which are localized in the Latin Quarter were recalled from actual occurrences in Stevenson's Parisian days.

His knowledge of the Paris of the painters was also utilized in the second story of the *New Arabian Nights*, wherein the inadvertent Silas Q. Scuddamore undergoes a series of hectic and troublesome adventures at the Bal Bullier. This dance-hall of the students of the Latin Quarter is described more clearly than any of the localities of London that are recorded in the same series of fantastic narratives.

The opening of *The Story of a Lie*—which Stevenson wrote in the second cabin of the S.S. *Devonia* during the course of his first pilgrimage to America—is also set in modern Paris. Concerning this comparatively unnoted novelette, an interesting anecdote was once told to me by

a lady who was intimately acquainted with R. L. S during the period of his residence at Vailima. She told me that Stevenson had drawn the character of the disreputable "Admiral" from actual life; that he had invented a daughter for him for the purpose of the tale; that, several years later, he had discovered that the original of the despicable "Admiral" actually had a daughter, who was still living in the world; that, thereafter, Louis had lived in constant trembling lest this totally unknown young woman should read the book and recognize the portrait of her father; and that he had made a vow, in consequence, that he would never again permit himself to draw a tale from fact or make use of actual people in his fiction.

But Stevenson was at home not merely in contemporary Paris; he was equally at home—in an imaginative sense—in the Paris of the Middle Ages. Any reader of his literary essays must remember that he was a great lover of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas *père*, a great student of François Villon and Charles of Orléans. His immediate knowledge of the Latin Quarter—the oldest quarter in Paris, by the way—supplemented by his reading of the writers of the past, and those other writers whose chief charm was their ability to recall and to revive the past, afforded him the material he needed for his tales of mediæval France.

Stevenson's interest in the history of Paris would be scarcely worth recording were it not for the fact [which has been already noted] that he never showed the slightest interest in the history of London. His London—so to speak—is devoid of any past; but his Paris stretches backward through the centuries. The first story that he ever pub-

ANTWERP—THE START OF THE INLAND VOYAGE

"*An Inland Voyage* is the record of a canoe trip on the rivers and canals between Antwerp and Pontoise that was undertaken in the summer of 1876 in company with Sir Walter Simpson."—Page 95.

lished was a tale of mediæval Paris, *A Lodging for the Night.* In origin it was an offshoot from two of the critical papers which were later collected in *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*—the essay on *Victor Hugo's Romances* and the essay on *François Villon.* In this great story Stevenson looked at Villon through the eyes of Victor Hugo. The tale is utterly original in style. A Paris of the past is recreated by a master hand. But *A Lodging for the Night*—despite its manifest, peculiar merits—may be regarded as the sort of story Hugo would have written if he, too, had made a thorough study of the life and work of the greatest vandal among poets, the greatest poet among vandals.

Stevenson's second story, *The Sire de Malétroit's Door,* is also set in mediæval France. It is the sort of tale that old Dumas might have told if he had ever had sufficient leisure to develop the finished style of R. L. S. The story happens in a nameless town. We are informed that the hero, Denis de Beaulieu, is a resident of Bourges; and the scene of the tale may be imagined as a lesser Bourges, more dark and little and intimate and thrilling. There are glimpses of Gothic architecture in this story that show us that Stevenson had used his eyes to better advantage in France than he ever used them in England. In France, where his eyes were open, he could see the past; in England, where his eyes were shut, he could scarcely see the present.

VI

It was in April, 1875, that Bob Stevenson, who, being a painter, was already "a consistent Barbizonian," first introduced his cousin Louis to the delights of living in the out-

skirts of the Forest of Fontainebleau. They made their headquarters at Siron's, in Barbizon, where they were known as "Stennis *aîné*" and "Stennis *frère*." Under these names, they step bodily into the pages of *The Wrecker*. The cousins play but minor parts in the tangled narrative of this amorphous work of fiction; but the little that we see of them is drawn directly from life.

In company with Sir Walter Simpson, Stevenson returned to Siron's in July of the same year. This time he remained for several weeks, devoting his ample leisure to the study of Charles of Orléans and François Villon, and to the practice of the old French verse-forms—in one of which, the *rondel*, he attained a notable proficiency. From 1875 until he decamped to California on his great adventure, four years later, Louis never let a year go by without lingering for several weeks at Barbizon. Indeed, throughout this period, it would not be incorrect to consider as his home, or permanent address, the Forest of Fontainebleau.

He was a great walker in these days, and explored not only the forest itself, but all the towns of the adjacent countryside. He knew not only Barbizon, but Marlotte, Montigny, and Chailly-en-Bière, Cernay la Ville, Bourron, Moret, Nemours, and Grez. The traveller who visits any of these entrancing little towns will find himself walking in the footsteps of R. L. S. It is no longer necessary to describe them: they have been described for all time in the two essays in which Louis has recounted his memories of this district—the paper entitled *Fontainebleau* and the paper entitled *Forest Notes*.

These towns, also, are made much of in those other works

of Stevenson's which are less frankly personal. The *Envoy* to *Underwoods*, for instance, which wishes to all

> A house with lawns enclosing it,
> A living river by the door,
> A nightingale in the sycamore,

was inspired by the hospitable aspect of Mr. Will H. Low's little garden at Montigny-sur-Loing. The gayest of Stevenson's stories, *Providence and the Guitar*, dances about the outskirts of the enchanted forest; and the most richly humorous of all his works of fiction, *The Treasure of Franchard*, leads us to the famous gorge that is hidden in the very heart of that alluring wilderness of trees.

Both of these novelettes, of course, were written elsewhere; but their nimbleness of spirit affords us a reliable index to Stevenson's state of mind in the brave days when he was twenty-five. His stepdaughter has stated that, years later in Samoa, he summed up his works of fiction in this phrase: "Others touch the heart; I clutch the throat." Indeed, there is discernible in nearly all his novels a certain ecstasy of grimness. But *Providence and the Guitar*—to continue the quotation—is "a very pretty story, full of sweetness and the milk of human kindness."

Next to Barbizon, where one could feel so free and happy at Siron's, Stevenson's favourite haunt in the entire district of Fontainebleau was Grez. He wrote to his mother in the summer of 1875: "I have been three days at a place called Grez, a pretty and very melancholy village on the plain. A low bridge, with many arches choked with sedge; green fields of white and yellow water-lilies; poplars and willows in-

numerable; and about it all such an atmosphere of sadness and slackness, one could do nothing but get into the boat and out of it again, and yawn for bedtime." But later, in the essay entitled *Fontainebleau*, he wrote, in an antithetic mood: "But Grez is a merry place after its kind: pretty to see, merry to inhabit. The course of its pellucid river, whether up or down, is full of attractions for the navigator; the mirrored and inverted images of trees; lilies, and mills, and the foam and thunder of weirs. And of all noble sweeps of roadway, none is nobler, on a windy dusk, than the high-road to Nemours between its lines of talking poplar."

Grez is notable, in Stevenson's work, as the home of Dr. Desprez in *The Treasure of Franchard;* but it is even more notable, in his life, as the place where, in the summer of 1876, he met the woman who was destined to become his wife. At the time of their meeting, Louis was only twenty-five and Mrs. Osbourne was thirty-seven. Despite this disparity in their ages, their affinity was immediate. As Mr. Graham Balfour has said: "He straightway fell in love; he knew his own mind, and in spite of all dissuasions and difficulties, his choice never wavered. The difficulties were so great and hope so remote that nothing was said to his parents or to any but two or three of his closest friends." Years later, Louis wrote, "As I look back, I think my marriage was the best move I ever made in my life"; and nearly all his friends, when they came to know Fanny Stevenson, agreed with him. What seemed at the time to be a premature step for a writer whose career was still uncertain, turned out in the end to be the making of the man.

VII

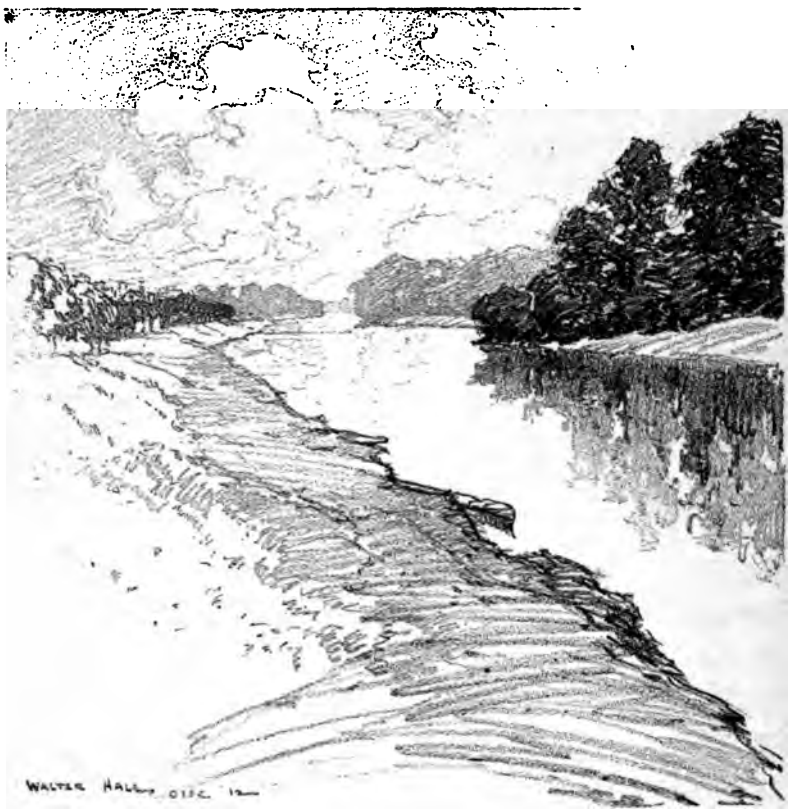
There is another aspect of Stevenson's apprenticeship at Fontainebleau which has never been sufficiently emphasized. He was living in a community of painters, not of writers. Thereby he became confirmed in the opinion that art should be regarded as a handicraft. Painters work with their hands; and this is a fact that helps to keep them sane. Too many young writers merely dream about the things they mean to do, until they dream that they have done them; and thereafter waste invaluable afternoons talking vaguely to admiring females, of both sexes, about their "mission" and their "message." A painter's "mission" is to paint; his "message" is to cover canvas; and he hasn't any time to talk about himself before the sun goes down. A painter has to be a workman; and he has to learn that art is something to toil for and not to dream about.

Stevenson was never one of those who hold the heresy that great writing will arise from "inspiration," and that any man, upon the impulse of the moment, will be able to say a thing well, provided only that he shall have something to say. He knew that the craft of writing must be learned by practice, like the craft of painting. Nobody can play the violin unless he has learned to do so—not even if the man were Keats; and nobody can write unless he has written—and written, for the most part, badly—for a score of years. Literary style does not arise spontaneously from getting excited or getting inspired or getting drunk; it arises from twenty years of unexcited, uninspired, unintoxicated study of rhythm and of literation. A man must learn to make a

table or a shoe; a man must also learn to make a story or a poem or a play; and "genius" is merely a label for the aptitude to learn.

Louis, in his letters, speaks often of his "trade," his "craft," his "business," his "job"; he never speaks of his "genius" or his "inspiration," and he seldom speaks of his "art." He avoids, by wholesome instinct, those words which grease the lips of sentimental rhapsodists, but which would have excited ribald, roaring laughter from the painters who congregated at Siron's. It is the mark of a good workman that he is not ashamed of work. If he brandishes the brush or plies the pen, he knows what he has done and why he did it; he never pretends that some angel from otherwhere took the implement out of his hand and did he knows not what.

It is because Stevenson learned at Fontainebleau to accept the attitude of the workman toward his work that his essay *On Some Technical Elements of Style in Literature* is the only utterance upon this subject that is of any service to the student of the craftsmanship of writing. While other men have talked vaguely about style as a matter of genius or of inspiration, Louis talks about it soundly as a business of setting words together—a craft that may be taught by those who know, a craft that may be learned by those who are willing to work. "Lilies, and mills, and the foam and thunder of weirs"—a man must have learned something about letters before he can write a phrase like that, even though, at the moment, he be excited about Grez, and be writing, at the moment, to his mother. And at Barbizon, where painters toiled all day to make little, negligible things called



ON THE OISE BELOW LA FÈRE

"Below *La Fère* the river runs through a piec
of open pastoral country; green, opulent, love
by breeders; called the Golden Valley."
—*An Inland Voyage.*—Page 9

"studies," Louis imbibed the proper respect of a craftsman for his craft.

VIII

The first two books that Stevenson published deal with journeyings in France. *An Inland Voyage* is the record of a canoe trip on the rivers and canals between Antwerp and Pontoise that was undertaken in the summer of 1876 in company with Sir Walter Simpson, who appears as the "Cigarette" of the narrative; and *Travels with a Donkey* is the record of a tramp through the Cévennes undertaken in the autumn of 1878 in company with no one else than the immortal Modestine. It would be impertinent to append any details to Stevenson's own descriptions of the places visited; but something may be said, in general, about his methods of observation on journeys such as these.

In the first place, it should be noted that Stevenson loved travel for the sake of travel. He enjoyed the sense of moving on, quite irrespective of the goal he might be moving toward. In practice, as in preaching, he approved the maxim that "to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive." He liked to travel in France as he liked to travel in no other country; but, because of this fact, and not in spite of it, he never visited Rouen nor Amiens nor Rheims nor Carcassonne—those "show-places" of the tourist that lay, at one time or another, only a little distant from his path. Even in the towns he visited, he frequently neglected to see the buildings that are starred in Baedeker, because he was so busy enjoying the casual adventures of the by-ways.

When Louis took a trip in search of "copy," the one thing he was careful to observe was himself. His method of de-

scription is entirely subjective. He does not so much describe Noyon or Compiègne as record what happened to the impressionable temperament of R. L. S. in the one place and the other. To go deliberately to Rheims for the purpose of describing what, in his departed century, was the most exquisite efflorescence of mediæval architecture would have required objectivity of observation; he preferred to record his own emotions in a comparatively inconsiderable city like Maubeuge. In other words, he travelled not so much to see this place or that, as merely to transfer himself from one place to another and to feel his mental pulse in passing.

Even in the Cévennes, he made his book out of himself instead of out of the country that a less inspired traveller would have explored more thoroughly. In the twelve days of his transit, he followed merely the most convenient roads, and missed without regret many of the details of the district that are most noted for their beauty. He could make a Rembrandt picture out of the shining of his midnight cigarette upon his silver ring; and a writer who can do that does not need to delve for inspiration into the gorges of the Tarn.

The Trappist Monastery of Notre Dame des Neiges, where Louis lodged for two days—September 26th and 27th, 1878—is described at length in the third section of *Travels with a Donkey*. It was here that he derived the inspiration for one of his most important poems—number XXIII of *Underwoods*, entitled *Our Lady of the Snows*—in which he attacks the monastic theory of life because of its negation of all positive morality. This monastery was almost com-

pletely destroyed by fire in the early summer of 1912. By this misfortune the most interesting memento of Stevenson's transit through the Upper Gévaudan was deleted from the contemplation of future pilgrims on his trail.

Before setting out on his tramping trip with the uncomplaining Modestine, Stevenson spent a month at Le Monastier—during which, according to his custom of describing places at a distance, he wrote the major part of his little book on *Edinburgh*. This sojourn at Le Monastier is commemorated in the unfinished essay entitled *A Mountain Town in France*, which, originally projected as a prologue to *Travels with a Donkey*, was never published till after his death. When this paper first appeared, in the winter number of *The Studio* for 1896, it was accompanied by several sketches which Stevenson had made of the town itself and the surrounding country. These pencil drawings, though obviously the work of one who was little practised in the graphic art, have been praised by no less an authority than Mr. Joseph Pennell for their accuracy of observation and their essential truth to nature.

IX

In the autumn of 1882, after Stevenson was married, he sought a settled residence in the south of France. In September he visited Montpellier, in company with his cousin Bob. In October he was met at Marseilles by his wife; and the couple installed themselves in a house and garden called the "Campagne Defli," in the suburb of St. Marcel, seated within sight of that storied harbour in which the Château d'If of Monte Cristo seems to float at anchor. But after

two months an outbreak of fever drove the Stevensons to Nice, whence, in February, 1883, they proceeded to Hyères.

After a brief residence at the Hotel des Îles d'Or, they installed themselves in a chalet at Hyères, which was called "La Solitude." Here they lived from March, 1883, to July, 1884; but an epidemic of cholera which broke out in the summer of 1884 drove the Stevensons to seek another residence and resulted in their exodus to Bournemouth.

Comparatively little has been written of the period of Stevenson's residence at Hyères; but this period is often mentioned in his later letters as the happiest of his life. "I was only happy once; that was at Hyères," he wrote to Sir Sidney Colvin from Vailima; and the name of the place rings out with a sudden, unexpected poignancy. It was of the chalet "La Solitude" that he wrote, in the seventh poem of *Underwoods*—

> Friend, in my mountain-side demesne,
> My plain-beholding, rosy, green,
> And linnet-haunted garden-ground,
> Let still the esculents abound—

and he rarely wrote poems except when he was personally moved. From "La Solitude" he wrote to Mr. Low, in October, 1883: "I live in a most sweet corner of the universe, sea and fine hills before me, and a rich variegated plain; and at my back a craggy hill, loaded with vast feudal ruins. I am very quiet; a person passing by my door half startles me; but I enjoy the most aromatic airs, and at night the most wonderful view into a moonlit garden. By day this garden fades into nothing, overpowered by its surroundings

SAINT JACQUES—COMPIEGNE

"Stevenson's method of description is entirely subjective. He does not so much describe Noyon or Compiègne as record what happened to the impressionable temperament of R. L. S. in the one place and the other."—Page 96.

and the luminous distance; but at night and when the moon is out, that garden, the arbour, the flight of stairs that mount the artificial hillock, the plumed blue gum-trees that hang trembling, become the very skirts of Paradise. Angels, I know, frequent it; and it thrills all night with the flutes of silence."

Louis did comparatively little writing at Hyères. He was well and happy at "La Solitude"; and the fact has been already noted that he worked most and worked best when he was ill and kept in bed. He finished *Prince Otto* and *The Silverado Squatters*, he toiled at *The Black Arrow*, and he wrote many of the poems that were subsequently gathered into the *Child's Garden of Verses*. But though his formal labours at this period were comparatively insignificant, his casual and unpremeditated letters were the brightest and best of his career. He was thoroughly alive at this time, and his essential *liveliness* is nowhere else so well expressed as in his correspondence.

X

It was in August, 1886, that Stevenson made his last pilgrimage to France. He proceeded to Paris, with Mrs. Stevenson and Henley, to visit Mr. and Mrs. Will H. Low, who were established at that time in the Rue Vernier. Henley introduced him to Rodin; and his final memory of the mother-country of the arts was his memory of the Michel-Angelo of modern times.

When Louis returned to London in October of that year, he little realized that he had left for the last time the freest and most hospitable country he had ever known. Other-

wise we may be sure that, in the heart of so loyal a Scot, there would have sounded some echo of that song which the poet has ascribed to Mary Stuart:

O, ma patrie,
La plus chérie,
Adieu, plaisant pays de France!

Chapter Five

THE REST OF EUROPE

CHAPTER FIVE

THE REST OF EUROPE

I

OUTSIDE of France, Stevenson's acquaintance with the continent of Europe was singularly limited. His failure to familiarize himself with many of the cities that are known to nearly every traveller arose not from any lack of opportunity, but merely from a lack of inclination. He had a gypsy love of journeying, but he devoted little forethought to his journey's end. In his attitude toward travel, as in his attitude toward college education, he might be "pointed out for the pattern of an idler." He would never go deliberately to any place for the sake of seeing any particular thing, however famous it might be. Travel of that sort would smack of system, and he preferred a drifting truancy. He was a fortnight at Frankfort-on-the-Main, but he never went to Heidelberg to see the castle. He spent some time at Montpellier; but he never went to Nîmes to see the temple, nor to Carcassonne to see what might have served as the setting of such a mediæval story as *The Sire de Malétroit's Door*. One cannot imagine Louis going all the way to Castelfranco to see that single picture that some of us have seen—a picture so consummate that it makes blood-brothers ever afterward of all the men of all the nations who have made that sacred pilgrimage; and if ever any accident of destiny had tossed

Stevenson ashore at Patras, it may be assumed as certain that he would not have bothered to complete the journey to Olympia, even to see the Hermes of Praxiteles. He was not that sort of traveller. "The most beautiful adventures," he has told us, "are not those we go to seek"; and though Louis would never have gone to Olympia, he would have enjoyed adventures at every street-corner of Patras—a town in which, according to systematic travellers, there is nothing to demand attention.

Thus, in analyzing Stevenson's entire experience of travel, we are confronted by the paradox that he saw most where there was least to see. He has given us an essay on Monterey, but he has given us no essay on Antwerp. What appealed to him in travel was, first of all, himself, and, secondly, the casual people with whom he scraped acquaintance on a journey. Third and lastly [as Touchstone might have said], he had an eye for scenery; but he took no interest in what appeals to the majority of travellers. He would scarcely cross the street to see a famous building or a famous statue or a famous picture; he would never deliberately plan a trip to take him to a series of famous cities. Instead, he made it his boast that he could always be happy waiting at a railway junction, because he "would have some scattering thoughts," he "could count some grains of memory," compared to which the whole of many romances seemed but dross.

We may envy Stevenson that inspired self-sufficiency that enabled him, at any time and in any place, to batter himself into an adventure [and this rather violent phrase is one that he himself applied to Robert Burns]; but we cannot envy him that almost obstinate truancy which robbed him of a

A ROAD IN THE CÉVENNES

"*Travels with a Donkey* is the record of a tramp through the Cévennes undertaken in the autumn of 1878 in company with no one else than the immortal Modestine. In the twelve days of his transit Stevenson followed merely the most convenient roads, and missed without regret many of the details of the district that are most noted for their beauty."—Page 96.

sight of many of the wonders of the world. Travel, after all, must be considered as a serious engagement if it is to be made conducive to the culture of a man. If a person capable of culture finds himself shipwrecked at the Piræus, he owes it as a duty to his destiny to leap into a cab and drive to the Acropolis. The point that joyous accidents might happen to him at the harbour-side does not obliterate the more important point that still more wonderful adventures might happen to him as he sat before the Parthenon.

But Stevenson, who cared so very much for letters and so very much for his own adventurous and stinging experience of life, cared very little for architecture or painting or sculpture, or for the glamour that tradition gathers around places that are memorable for a noble past. A cultured person is prepared to appreciate with equal keenness a worthy work of any of the arts; but, by this definition, Stevenson was never a cultured person. He could appreciate only what happened to himself; and great buildings, great pictures, great statues, seldom [in any real sense] happened to him. Though widely read in literature, Louis knew little of the other arts—far less than he might have learned if he had opened his eyes to the many opportunities for education that were offered in the course of his repeated pilgrimages. At Barbizon and Paris he lived in the company of painters; yet never, even in his letters, does he show that he had studied the masterpieces in the Louvre. When he wrote his thrice-rejected essay on *Some Portraits by Raeburn*—the only work in which he touches on the art of painting—he was more interested in the personalities of the sitters than in the art by which their living lineaments had been made immortal.

Except for the eloquent rhapsody on the Elgin marbles that was written in a personal letter to Mrs. Sitwell, he never revealed in any of his writings an interest in the art of sculpture. He played at composing music, just as he had played at drawing landscapes at Le Monastier; but he never developed any culture in the art. To architecture he seems to have remained almost entirely insensible: otherwise he would have recorded in his letters some impressions of the greatest buildings he had seen. Concerning art in the abstract he was an eager theorist; but he was strangely lacking in appreciation of art in the concrete, except, of course, within the precincts of that special art of letters which enchanted him into a special sort of scholarship. Outside his own field Stevenson was not, like Hawthorne, afflicted with bad taste —the sort of taste that led the author of *The Scarlet Letter* to regard W. W. Story as a great sculptor: it is nearer to the truth to say that he had no taste at all. He would rather spend an hour talking amiably with a cab-driver than spend an hour in silent converse with the Venus of Melos. The first experience offered, to his thinking, an adventure; the second was merely an incident that might occur to anybody. Thus, for his great gift of attracting to himself adventures that pass other people by, he paid the penalty of indifference toward many great things that other people see.

II

ITALY

Few people, even among those who call themselves Stevensonians, are aware that R. L. S. was ever in Italy. In March, 1863, when Louis was twelve years old, his parents took

him from Mentone on a tour through Genoa, Naples, Rome, Florence, and Venice; and it was not until the end of May that the family returned northward, by way of the Tyrol and the Rhine. This trip, however, made no impression on his mind; and in later years the very fact that he had taken it seems almost to have faded from his memory. He was never heard to speak of Italy by any of his friends; and nowhere in his works, not even in his letters, does he ever mention any of the great Italian cities as a place that he himself had seen.

The author of *Life on the Lagoons*, Horatio F. Brown, who was a friend of John Addington Symonds, became intimate with Stevenson at Davos in 1881. The intimacy is attested by the fact that Louis gave to Brown his favourite copy of the *Fruits of Solitude* of William Penn. After returning to Venice, Brown sent to Louis some translations from old Venetian boat songs; and the gift was acknowledged with the poem beginning,

> Brave lads in olden musical centuries
> Sang, night by night, adorable choruses,
> Sat late by alehouse doors in April
> Chaunting in joy as the moon was rising,

which, next to Tennyson's address to Milton, is the most successful experiment in the difficult Alcaic measure extant in the English language. Throughout this intimacy, however, though Brown often talked of Venice for hours at a time, he never discovered that Stevenson had been there. Mr. Lloyd Osbourne has recorded that he never heard his stepfather refer to the Italian tour except on one occasion,

"when he recalled with delight the picturesque appearance of their military escort in horsemen's cloaks riding through the Papal States."

That a boy of twelve should spend nearly three months in Naples, Rome, Florence, and Venice, and should afterwards remember nothing but a single incident in the transit of the road, appears indeed incredible; yet why, if he remembered Venice, should he have neglected to reveal the fact to Brown? At so early an age, one would not expect a studious appreciation of architecture or of painting or of sculpture; but one would expect, at least, that the strangeness of a city where the streets are water would register an indelible impression on the mind. And to see Florence at twelve and then forget it seems a little like a sin that needs to be forgiven.

Yet this lack of interest in great and famous cities remained, as we have seen, habitual with Stevenson in later life. At no time would he have felt a sympathetic thrill at hearing the Italian proverb, "See Naples, and die." He would always have been interested more in "horsemen's cloaks" and in "the picturesque appearance of a military escort" along an open road.

For effects of landscape, on the other hand, he had an open and an eager eye at the early age of twelve. It has been already noted that he developed an enthusiasm for the valley of the Rhone on the journey southward to Mentone, and that he was able to recall the topography of that Riviera town itself with a singular particularity after an interval of ten years. On the return from Italy in 1863, Louis was driven through the Brenner Pass and subsequently saw the Murgthal in Baden. So vivid was his recollection of these

mountain regions that, though he never visited either the Murgthal or the Brenner Pass again, he was able to combine his impressions of the two in the landscape setting of *Will o' the Mill*, which was written in Edinburgh, fourteen years later, in August, 1877. The characters in this story are clearly English; but no such landscape exists in England, or in Scotland, either. It is not surprising that the German Alps should have taken such strong hold upon the memory of an eager and impressionable boy; but the astounding and scarcely explicable fact remains that he was unable, at the same period of his career, to receive an abiding impression of the view of Buonarotti's dome from the Pincio at sunset or the massive majesty of the Coliseum underneath the moon.

III

SPAIN

Stevenson never crossed the Pyrenees; but one of his most elaborate short-stories was required, by a psychological necessity, to be set in Spain. *Olalla* was written at Bournemouth in 1885. Many critics have singled out this story as an instance in which, contrary to his custom, Louis described a landscape he had never seen; but this statement is not entirely in accordance with the facts. He derived the setting from his memories of Spanish California. It is for this reason, doubtless, that he makes the vegetation too luxuriant and fills the mountain gorges with abundant waterfalls. Those of us who are familiar with Spain will remember the aspect of aridity as the most insistent feature of the Spanish landscape. In such typical prospects as the view from the Escorial or the view from the Paseo del Rastro in Avila, the

observer gazes over barren sun-baked plains to an unnaturally far horizon. The Guadarrama Mountains, in which the story of *Olalla* seems imagined to occur, since the nameless city mentioned at the outset of the narrative can be no other than Madrid, are more dusty, more scraggy, more stunted and desolate in vegetation, than the California landscape from which Stevenson received his hints; and, even in the spring season, there is only an inconsiderable gush of water down the rocks.

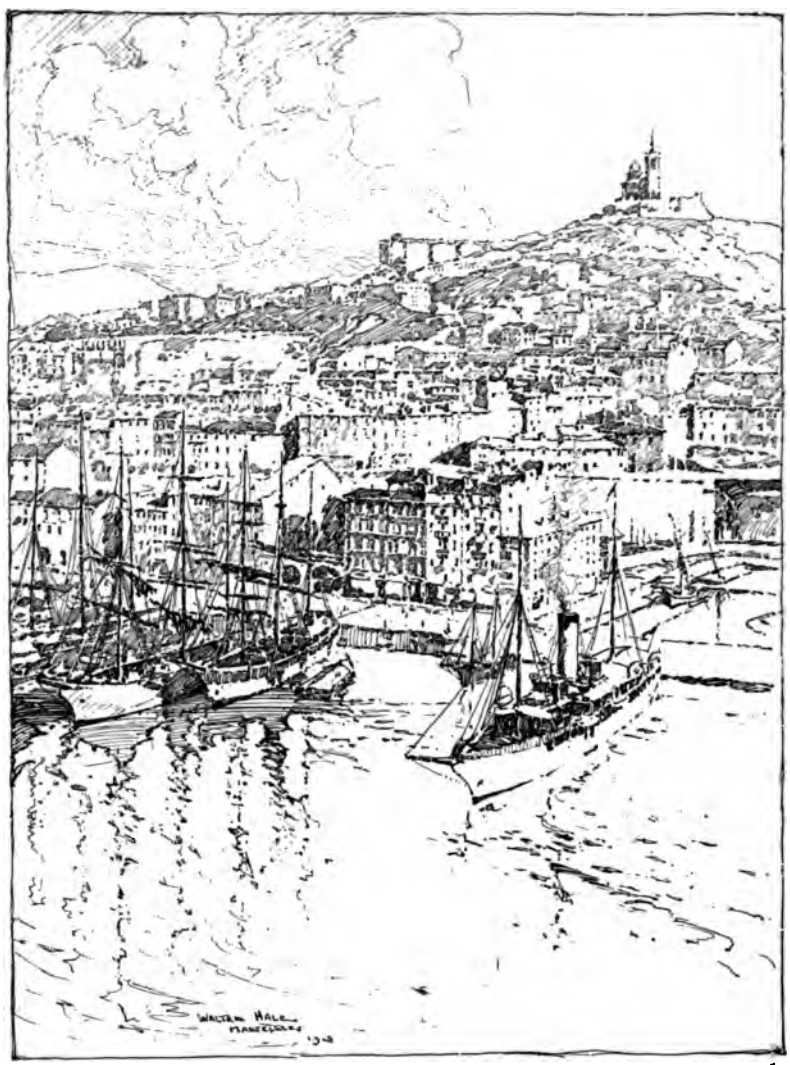
The architecture of the residencia is sufficiently correct, except for one detail. The hero's room is "lined with some lustrous wood disposed in panels." I have never seen a room in any ancient Spanish mansion lined with wood. The sort of room that Louis had in mind would, in actuality, be lined with the kind of coloured tiling that is called in Spanish *azulejo*.

But what may be termed the psychological atmosphere of *Olalla* is absolutely Spanish; and Stevenson learned more of Spain by lying in bed in Bournemouth and imagining what it must be like than he learned of Italy by being taken from one end of the country to the other at the age of twelve. The slow decay of the entire Spanish nation seems symbolized by the tragical disintegration of Olalla's family; and the sedentary, smiling, and weak-witted mother is characteristic of fully half the women that one sees in Spain to-day.

IV

GERMANY

Stevenson's experience of Germany was confined almost entirely to the summer of 1872. At that time Louis was supposed to be studying law; and there had been some talk



ALONG THE WATER FRONT—MARSEILLES

"In October, 1882, Stevenson was met at Marseilles by his wife; and the couple installed themselves in a house and garden called the 'Campagne Defli,' in the suburb of St. Marcel, seated within sight of that storied harbour in which the Château d'If of Monte Cristo seems to float at anchor."—Page 97.

of his taking a summer session at a German university, in company with Sir Walter Simpson. A project so appalling to the apologist for idlers was of course rejected; but the two friends, having abandoned the purpose of the journey, saw no reason to abandon the journey itself, and they proceeded to Germany in July. Late in August Stevenson's parents joined him at Baden-Baden; and he then went for a short walking tour in the Black Forest, which afforded him several landscape impressions that later became useful in *Prince Otto*.

The Arethusa and the Cigarette—as they subsequently came to call themselves—proceeded to Germany by way of Brussels. From this delightful little minor Paris, Louis wrote to his mother on July 25th. According to his habit, he said no word of Rubens or the Palais de Justice or the church of Ste. Gudule; but he wrote a charming description of the nocturnal aspect of the Parc, and appended a vivid picture of a boy at his hotel who went about with a live snake in his pocket.

The two adventurers settled down at Frankfort-on-the-Main, and endeavoured, in a desultory fashion, to soak in the German language. Why they should have picked out Frankfort in preference to Dresden or Munich or Berlin remains a mystery. Frankfort is merely a commercial city, with no picturesque details except a second-rate cathedral and a rather charming group of old houses called the Römer; and even the German Baedeker advises the tourist to dismiss it with a single day.

It is not surprising that, at Frankfort, Louis should have gathered the impression that Germany was less civilized than Belgium. He wrote to his mother, on July 29th: "I had a swim

in the Main, and then bread and cheese and Bavarian beer in a sort of café, or at least the German substitute for a café; but what a falling off after the heavenly forenoons in Brussels!"

His method of studying the German language was to provide himself with a copy of the *Lieder und Balladen von Robert Burns*, "translated by one Silbergleit," and to regale the company at little rural taverns by reciting such verses as "*Mein Herz ist im Hochland, mein Herz ist nicht hier.*" Also he allowed the natives to ask him questions about Scotland. He went often to the opera; but he could not follow the language sufficiently to understand a play.

The two friends lived first at the Hotel Landsberg, and later moved into lodgings at No. 13 Rosengasse. This address was distant only a single block from the house, at No. 23 Grosse Hirschgraben, where Goethe was born, on August 28th, 1749, and spent his boyhood. Apart from its association with the greatest modern poet, the Goethe-Haus is well worth visiting for its architectural dignity and atmosphere of age; yet it may be doubted if Louis ever went to see it. It is never mentioned in his letters from the Rosengasse. Instead, we find descriptive passages like this: "There is here such a twittering of canaries (I can see twelve out of our window), and such continual visitation of gray doves and big-nosed sparrows, as make our little bye-street into a perfect aviary." No other visitor to Frankfort would have counted those twelve canaries; and no other would have remained indifferent to Goethe's house around the corner. Here we have in a nutshell the definitive feature of Stevenson's attitude of mind toward travel.

The German language did not come easily to Louis, nor

did he develop any lasting interest in German literature. For a year or two after his stay in Frankfort he occasionally drifted into German phrases in his letters; but, considering his experience as a whole, it may be said that Germany meant next to nothing to him. Nobody who loved France so whole-heartedly as Louis could ever feel entirely at home beyond the Rhine.

He made no use of Germany in his works except for the landscape background of *Prince Otto*. This book was begun in California and finished at Hyères; but not only the nomenclature of the characters but the entire aspect of the countryside is German. Any travelled person, if asked to locate the imaginary state of Grünewald, would set it either in the Black Forest or in the mountains of Bavaria. Many of Stevenson's most elaborate effects of landscape are developed in this story; and it is therefore interesting to record that he had seen very little of the district from which he took the scenery. A day or two in Bavaria and a week or two in Baden afforded him a fund of memories on which he could draw a decade later in distant California; but of German cities, German art, and that methodical devotion to a regular routine that the Germans call life, he received no impressions that, in after years, seemed worth recalling.

V

SWITZERLAND

Every landscape painter knows that great mountains are less amenable to the uses of art than more homely and habitable hills, just as [in the technical sense of the word] the falls of Niagara are less "picturesque" than the falls of some com-

paratively little river like the Clyde. This may be the reason why Stevenson was more interested in the look of villages than in the look of cities; and it is certainly the reason why he set *Prince Otto* in Southern Germany instead of Switzerland—a country that was better known to him.

Stevenson spent two winters in Switzerland; but his feeling for the high Alps was conditioned by the fact that he did not go there as a tourist but was sent there as an invalid. In the autumn of 1880 [the first year of his married life] he was ordered by his physicians to try the clear cold climate of the Alps; and he selected Davos Platz as a place of residence, mainly because another famous literary invalid was already installed there. This was John Addington Symonds—the "Opalstein" of *Talk and Talkers*.

Stevenson arrived at Davos Platz, with his wife and stepson, on November 4th, and remained there, at the Hotel Belvedere, until the following April. The conditions of his life in this Alpine resort were vividly described in a series of four papers sent home to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. *Health and Mountains* appeared on February 17th, 1881, and was followed by *Davos in Winter* on February 21st, *Alpine Diversions* on February 26th, and *The Stimulation of the Alps* on March 5th. These interesting papers stand, in two ways, unique among his writings. In the first place, they violate his lifelong habit of never describing a place till after he had left it; and, in the second place, they are the only essays, with the single exception of *Ordered South*, in which he appears before the public frankly as an invalid.

Stevenson did scarcely any other work that winter, except to see *Virginibus Puerisque* through the press. It was a

passive period in his existence, during which he was contented to sit around and watch himself grow well. Mrs. Sitwell came out in the early spring, to watch beside the deathbed of her young son, who succumbed to consumption in the month of April. This sad event was the occasion of Stevenson's greatest poem—to me, at least, it has always seemed the greatest—the poem entitled *In Memoriam F. A. S.*, which ends with the stanza:

> All that life contains of torture, toil, and treason,
> Shame, dishonour, death, to him were but a name.
> Here, a boy, he dwelt through all the singing season
> And ere the day of sorrow departed as he came.

The next year, 1881, the Stevensons returned to Davos Platz on October 18th and remained once more till April. This season they installed themselves in a house of their own, the Chalet am Stein, a dependency of the Hotel Buol, seated on a hillside above the English chapel. Here Louis completed *Treasure Island*, which had been begun at Braemar—writing the last fourteen chapters in a fortnight of "delighted industry." Before leaving Davos finally, he also wrote nearly all of *The Silverado Squatters*, and several essays, including *Talks and Talkers* [suggested by his daily chats with Symonds] and *A Gossip on Romance*. This second season in Switzerland, it will be noted, was much more fruitful than the first; but Louis always fretted against the regulated life of an invalid resort, and he was delighted when his physicians permitted him, when the next winter rolled around, to forsake the high Alps and return to the Riviera.

There was so little to do at Davos that Stevenson passed a

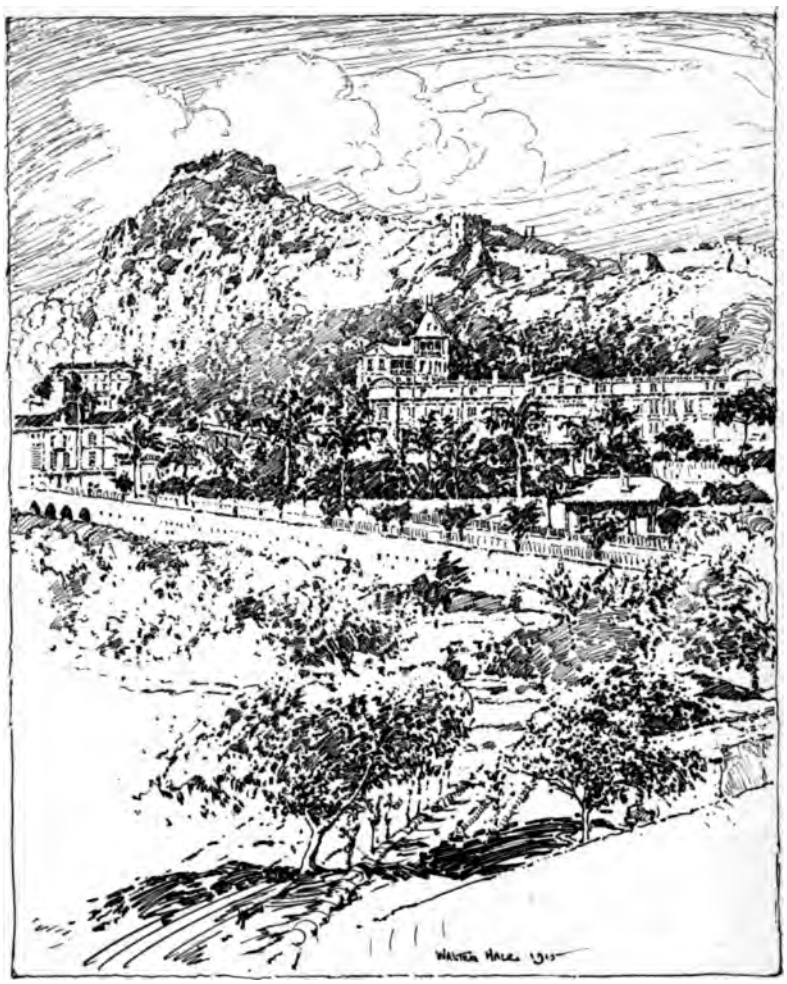
great deal of his time in play with his stepson, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne—who, at that period, was only thirteen years of age. It was at Davos that these two playmates developed the elaborate war game which Mr. Osbourne has so charmingly described. The second season in Switzerland was also the occasion of the publications of the Davos Press. Mr. Osbourne had a toy printing-press, on which he set up a boyish composition of his own entitled, *Black Canyon, or Wild Adventures in the Far West: A Tale of Instruction and Amusement for the Young.* His stepfather caught the infection, and composed several playful poems for publication by "S. L. Osbourne and Company." These he illustrated with wood-cuts, having spontaneously discovered the art of wood-engraving by experimenting with chance pieces of soft wood, cut apparently from packing-cases.

Both texts and illustrations of the publications of the Davos Press are known to Stevenson collectors. It seems to me that both have been a little overpraised. Many of the poems are lacking in point; and the cuts, though spirited in action and executed with evident delight, are a little too crude to be entirely amusing. They cannot hold a candle, for example, to Mr. Kipling's joyous illustrations to the *Just-So Stories.* Neither man was trained to be a graphic artist; but Mr. Kipling's work, for all its faults, is art, and Stevenson's is not.

VI

HOLLAND

In a literal sense, Holland is the easiest country in the world to see. I distinctly remember that, once, when I was



HOTEL DES ÎLES D'OR—HYÈRES

"After a brief residence at the Hotel des Îles d'Or, they installed themselves in a chalet at Hyères, which was called 'La Solitude.' . . . Comparatively little has been written of the period of Stevenson's residence at Hyères; but this period is often mentioned in his later letters as the happiest of his life."—Page 98.

travelling through the Netherlands on a canal-boat, I saw at the same time, from my perch on the poop-deck, a distant prospect of three great cities—Leyden and Haarlem and Amsterdam. The country, as everybody knows, is absolutely flat; and the view in all directions is interrupted only by windmills, scattered hamlets, and the long lines of trees that hedge the waterways. The look of Holland [as the French would say] can be gathered at a single "stroke of the eye."

It takes time, however, to study the art treasures of the country. With these treasures, Stevenson was not familiar. His knowledge of Holland was restricted to that single glance which has already been defined.

It was not because he cared especially for Holland that Stevenson, writing in far-away Vailima, set the final section of *Catriona* in that country. It was necessary, for the purpose of his narrative, that David and Catriona should journey alone together through some foreign country close to Scotland—some country, moreover, through which a young girl could travel afoot without difficulty. Holland filled the bill, in both of these regards; and, furthermore, it was a country that Louis could well enough describe in Samoa without having any special knowledge of it.

As the two young lovers land at Helvoetsluys, the hero—who tells the story—says, "I had my first look of Holland—a line of windmills birling in the breeze." This description is interesting in two ways: it is so orthodox in content, and such a little masterpiece of literation. David and Catriona proceed "in four hours of travel to the great city of Rotterdam." This great city is described in a single paragraph; and all that is precisely noted in this passage is that the

streets were "pretty brightly lighted and thronged with wild-like, outlandish characters." This description would apply to many other harbour towns—Marseilles for instance; but the local look of Rotterdam is totally different from the local look of Marseilles.

The hero and the heroine proceed afoot from Rotterdam to Leyden, through Delft and The Hague. I have followed the same route on a bicycle, and know the country well. Delft is described by David Balfour in the following phrases: "The red gabled houses made a handsome show on either hand of the canal; the servant lassies were out slestering and scrubbing at the very stones upon the public highway": and that is all. These details are true; they are, indeed, the two details most necessary to enumerate; but any one who loves the quaintest of Dutch cities must wonder why David Balfour saw no more of Delft on his pedestrian excursion.

The Hague is dismissed in a single word, without description; and the lovers finally arrive at Leyden—a place determined by the law studies of the hero. Fifty pages are devoted to their life in Leyden: every day they go forth for a walk about the town: yet no single feature of this very interesting city is described, and, for all the reader is privileged to see, the scene might just as well be set in any other country. To sum the matter up—though over a hundred pages of *Catriona* are set in Holland, the sentences devoted to description of the special aspects of that unique and fascinating country might all be printed on a single page. The narrative concerns itself almost entirely with a strictly personal analysis of the emotions of the hero and the heroine in their temerariously virginal relation to each other; and, dealing

with a dramatic foreground so tremulous and thrilling, the novelist did not concern himself with the less provocative details of that descriptive background which stood ready to his hand.

VII

Stevenson's handling of Holland in *Catriona* is so characteristic of his treatment of the element of setting in many of his other works of fiction that it demands particular attention. The critical conclusions of the present writer on this subject may best be expressed by summarizing a conversation with Mr. Henry James concerning the Dutch scenes in the novel now before us.

From Vailima, in December, 1893—a year before his death—Stevenson wrote to Mr. James as follows: "Your jubilation over *Catriona* did me good, and still more the subtlety and truth of your remark on starving the visual sense in that book. . . . I *hear* people talking, and I *feel* them acting, and that seems to me to be fiction. My two aims may be described as—*1st*, War to the adjective, *2d*, Death to the optic nerve."

This passage had always a little mystified me. "Death to the optic nerve" seemed so baseless an ejaculation from an author who, in the very book in question, had written such sentences as this: "She sat on the floor by the side of my great mail, and the chimney lighted her up, and shone and blinked upon her, and made her glow and darken through a wonder of fine hues!" If this were not a visual effect, what was? And then there thronged into my mind a myriad remembered postures of characters arrested in some pose made ready for the illustrator. All his life, it seemed, Louis

had been twanging at the optic nerve. What was meant, then, by the phrasing of this "great refusal"? Thereupon, remembering that, in his letters, Stevenson—chameleon-like—took colour from the person he was writing to, I determined to ask Mr. James to elucidate this statement.

I cannot attempt to print a verbal record of Mr. James's answer to this question; for such a record would read too like a parody of this great writer's later style. A witty lady once remarked that Mr. James conversed as if he were reading proofs. The fact is that the puzzling and fascinating style of his latest literary period is merely a literal recording of the manner of his conversation. I have never listened, with such rapt attention, to so entrancing a talker. A sentence, with Mr. James, is never the expression of a completed thought: it is always an adventure into the illimitable domain of thinking—interrupted by numberless parentheses incorporating unexpected particularizations—and yet wonderfully winning its way at last to a rounded and completed close.

I cannot record the manner of Mr. James's utterance; nor would I imitate it if I could. What he told me, in effect, was this: He had remonstrated with Stevenson, because, writing an historical novel dated in the middle of the eighteenth century, Louis had devoted more than a hundred pages to adventures set in Holland without affording the reader any adequate picture of that very interesting country in that very interesting time. Mr. James had considered that the business of the historical novelist was to grant the reader opportunities to live in other times and lands: here was an opportunity, and Stevenson had passed it by. The figures

in the foreground were thoroughly imagined; but the background had no real existence. The same adventures of the spirit might have taken place in Rye or in Albany at the present day.

This recollection of Mr. James's unpublished letter to Stevenson enabled me at last to understand Stevenson's reply to it. In saying, "Death to the optic nerve," Louis meant merely, "Death to setting, when I find myself concerned primarily with character in action." What was the use of describing either Delft or Leyden in detail—what was the use of recalling descriptively the aspect of the eighteenth century—when what concerned the novelist primarily was merely the emotions of a virgin man and the emotions of a virgin woman thrust by chance into an exquisite and perilous propinquity?

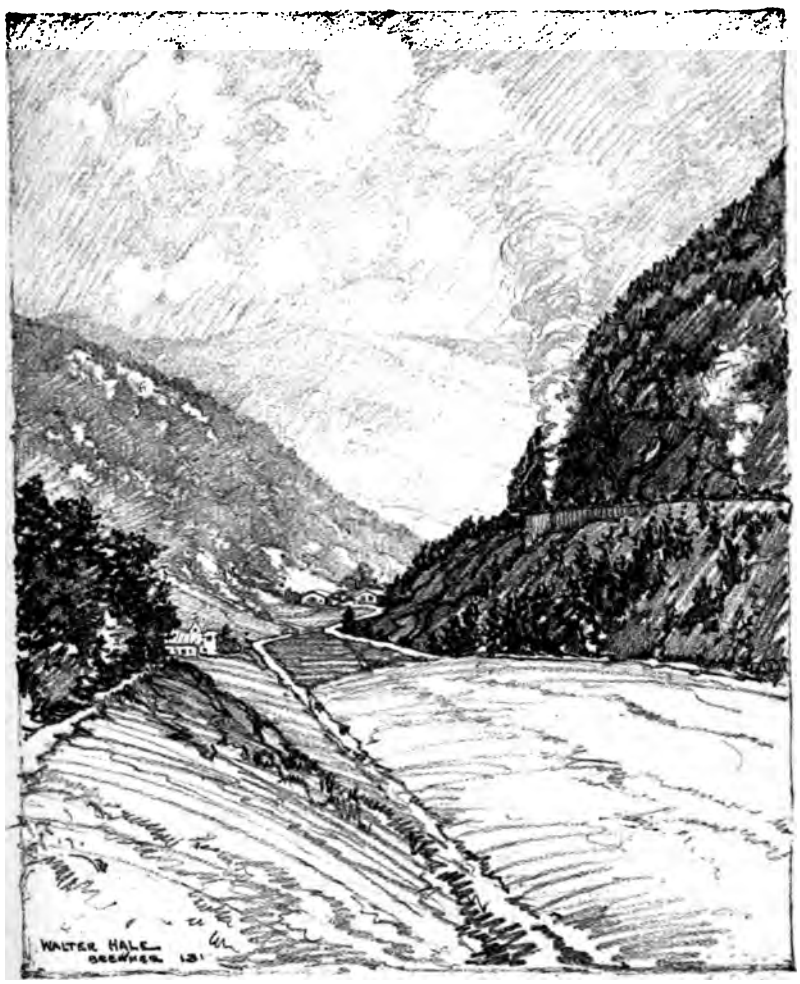
This suggestive conversation with Mr. James led me to review Stevenson's attitude toward the element of setting in all his works of fiction. Did Louis habitually "starve the visual sense," I asked myself, or did he blur his background only when it was artistically necessary to focus attention on the figures in the foreground? I soon determined that the latter was the true hypothesis.

There are three elements of narrative: action, characters, and setting. In any conceivable story, one of these elements must be more important than the others. Stevenson always directed the attention of the reader to that element of narrative which was necessarily predominant. In certain of his stories the emphasis was cast on the element of setting. "I'll give you an example"—said R. L. S. to Mr. Graham Balfour—"*The Merry Men*. There I began with the feeling

of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland, and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which that coast affected me." In this particular narrative, the reader is afforded a detailed description of the Isle of Earraid; but Stevenson never set forth a detailed description unless it was demanded by the exigencies of the tale.

In most of his narratives, the predominating element is action, and the secondary element is character. In these stories, he permits the reader to see only those details of setting that are required for the business of the action or for the elucidation of the characters. If a man has to light a candle, there must be a candle; if the candle has to burn steadily, there must be no wind; and so on. If David Balfour has to lose his purse in a crowded street, he must have a crowded street to lose it in: hence the description of Rotterdam, with its streets "thronged with wild-like, outlandish characters." But—in any story of action or of character—to describe a city or a room for the mere sake of describing it seemed to Stevenson a waste of time and a diseconomy of attention.

In other words, his use of setting is entirely utilitarian. For the foreground of his most typical narrations, he was contented—in the phrase of old Dumas—with "four boards, two actors, and a passion." For the background, he painted in only those details that were indispensable to the conduct of the action. The Master of Ballantrae and his brother, Mr. Henry, had to have a house in which to quarrel and a wood in which to fight a duel. Two swords had to hang upon the wall, because two swords were needed for the action. The season, and the weather, and the hour of the day must



THE BRENNER PASS

"On the return from Italy, in 1863, Louis was driven through the Brenner Pass and subsequently saw the Murgthal in Baden. So vivid was his recollection of these mountain regions that, though he never visited either the Murgthal or the Brenner Pass again, he was able to combine his impressions of the two in the landscape setting of *Will o' the Mill*, which was written in Edinburgh, fourteen years later."—Page 108.

be fit to the occasion: "a windless stricture of frost" must "bind the air." But the teller of the tale deemed it utterly superfluous to describe particularities of landscape or of architecture that might be admired for exactness by special students of the place and period of the story.

Hence, the paucity of description in the chapters of *Catriona* that are set in Holland was determined not by Stevenson's lack of intimate acquaintance with the country, but by his resolute determination not to allow his scenery to distract attention from his actors, in passages in which he had determined that the actors themselves should hold the centre of the stage. Anybody who has spent three days in Leyden could describe the city; but who else but R. L. S. could analyze all the subtle implications of that quarrel over "a copy of Heineccius"? It is not always the business of an historical novelist to write history; it is more frequently his business to write a novel.

In visiting any foreign country, Stevenson seldom saw anything else than what, for his own purposes as an artist, he needed to see. "A line of windmills birling in the breeze" sufficed him for a hundred pages of *Catriona*. More cultured travellers might devote a week to studying the paintings of Franz Hals in Haarlem; but he was Tusitala—the teller of tales.

Chapter Six

THE UNITED STATES

CHAPTER SIX

THE UNITED STATES

I

STEVENSON saw nothing of New York on the occasion of his first coming to America. At 6 P. M. on Sunday, August 18th, 1879, he disembarked from the second cabin of the S. S. *Devonia*, which had sailed from the Clyde on August 7th. His sole impulsion at the time was that of "stepping westward"; and he remained in the metropolis only twenty-three hours before crossing to Jersey City to take the train that was to carry him across the plains. Under the circumstances, he felt no desire to explore a city that seemed, at a glance, to have "an air of Liverpool."

Louis left the *Devonia* in the company of a fellow-traveller named Jones; and an account of their adventures is rendered in the final chapter of *The Amateur Emigrant*—the only passage in the works of R. L. S. that bears the simple caption of "New York." From this chapter the following quotations may be called to the remembrance of the reader:

> Jones and I issued into West Street, sitting on some straw in the bottom of an open baggage-wagon. It rained miraculously; and from that moment till on the following night I left New York, there was scarce a lull, and no cessation of the downpour. . . . It took us but a few minutes, though it cost a good deal of money, to be rattled along West Street to our destination: "Reunion House, No. 10 West Street, one

minute's walk from Castle Garden, the Steamboat Landings, California Steamers and Liverpool Ships; Board and Lodging per day 1 dollar, single meals 25 cents; no charge for storage or baggage; satisfaction guaranteed to all persons; Michael Mitchell, Proprietor." Reunion House was, I may go the length of saying, a humble hostelry. You entered through a long bar-room, thence passed into a little dining-room, and thence into a still smaller kitchen. The furniture was of the plainest; but the bar was hung in the American taste, with encouraging and hospitable mottoes. . . . I suppose we had one of the "private rooms for families" at Reunion House. It was very small, furnished with a bed, a chair, and some clothes-pegs; and it derived all that was necessary for the life of the human animal through two borrowed lights; one looking into the passage, and the second opening, without sash, into another apartment, where three men fitfully snored, or, in intervals of wakefulness, drearily mumbled to each other all night long. . . . You had to pass through the rain, which still fell thick and resonant, to reach a lavatory on the other side of the court. There were three basin-stands, and a few crumpled towels and pieces of wet soap, white and slippery like fish; nor should I forget a looking-glass and a pair of questionable combs. . . . Those who are out of pocket may go safely to Reunion House, where they will get decent meals and find an honest and obliging landlord.

Reunion House was still extant in the spring of 1895, when it was visited by a friend of the present writer, Mr. Louis Evan Shipman, who published his record of this visit in *The Bookbuyer*, for February, 1896. Some years ago, however, this landmark for literary pilgrims ceased to be. The site is now covered by the Whitehall Building—a skyscraper thirty-two stories high. The nearest edifice that dates from Stevenson's day is No. 16 West Street. This is a tenement house, four stories in height, built of red brick, with rusty iron fire-escapes dangling down the front. The street level is occupied by a cheap Greek restaurant. Beside the window of this restaurant, a dirty doorway admits the investigator, through a dingy passage, to a darkling inner court that ap-

THE CASTLE OF TORITA—GUADARRAMA PLATEAU

"Stevenson never crossed the Pyrenees; but one of his most elaborate short-stories was required, by a psychological necessity, to be set in Spain. He derived the setting of *Olalla* from his memories of Spanish California. Those of us who are familiar with Spain will remember the aspect of aridity as the most insistent feature of the Spanish landscape."—Page 109.

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pears predestined to enshrine "a pair of questionable combs." Nothing could be more characteristic of the transitional New York of the present time than the ridiculous contrast between the shabby and crumbling house at No. 16 West Street and the superb erection that adjoins it. To reconstruct the block as it appeared to R. L. S. it is necessary to imagine the Whitehall Building into non-existence, and to recreate a No. 10 in harmony with the aspect of the No. 16 that is still permitted to exist to-day. It is possible to imagine the astonishment of R. L. S.—if he could return to-morrow to seek the clothes that he abandoned "as they lay in a pulp in the middle of a pool upon the floor of Mitchell's kitchen"—to find himself confronted, on the site of his Reunion House, by a superb and soaring office building, while all the rest of his remembered West Street remained as dingy and depressing as of yore.

The single day of Monday, August 19th, 1879, was spent by R. L. S. in "nightmare wanderings in New York"; but these wanderings were motivated by immediate practical necessities, and not by any desire to see the city. "I went to banks, post-offices, railway-offices, restaurants, publishers, booksellers, money-changers"—he tells us—"and wherever I went, a pool would gather about my feet, and those who were careful of their floors would look on with an unfriendly eye."

II

Stevenson's account of his experiences in the second cabin of the S. S. *Devonia* is rendered in *The Amateur Emigrant;* and the story is continued in the long essay entitled *Across*

the Plains, which records his adventures in the emigrant train that, departing from Jersey City on August 19th, finally deposited him in San Francisco on August 30th, 1879.

I regret to say that I have never been to California. At one time or another I have personally visited all the important places that thus far have been mentioned in these pages; but, like many other natives of New York, I have always found it easier to cross the ocean than to cross the continent, and have studied nearly all the European countries before studying my own. I make this personal statement in explanation of a necessary lack of fulness in my tracing of the trail of Stevenson through California. I do not care to waste the reader's time by writing second-hand descriptions of places I have never seen, nor am I willing merely to repeat what has been said before. For this reason, I shall do no more than summarize the essential facts of Stevenson's experience of California, in order that the reader may not be required to overleap a hiatus in the record now presented.

Almost immediately after his arrival in San Francisco—where he was met, of course, by Mrs. Osbourne—Stevenson proceeded to "an angora goat ranche, in the Coast Line Mountains, eighteen miles from Monterey." Here he remained, in a condition of physical collapse, for two or three weeks. Subsequently, from the middle of September to the middle of December, he lived in Monterey, "the old Pacific capital"—a place described particularly in an essay appended to *Across the Plains*. Here he wrote *The Amateur Emigrant*, the essays on *Thoreau* and *Yoshida Torajiro*, and *The Pavilion on the Links*, began a novel—destined after-

ward to be discarded—entitled *A Vendetta in the West*, and planned *Prince Otto*.

Shortly before Christmas, Stevenson returned to San Francisco, where he rented a room in a cheap lodging-house kept by Mrs. Mary Carson, at No. 608 Bush Street. This three-story wooden tenement was torn down several years before the earthquake. For three months Louis lived in almost utter solitude and abject penury. On December 26th he wrote to Sidney Colvin: "For four days I have spoken to no one but to my landlady or landlord or to restaurant waiters. This is not a gay way to pass Christmas, is it? And I must own, the guts are a little knocked out of me." He adopted a régime that reduced his daily expenditure for food to forty-five cents. The restaurant which he frequented is no longer in existence. Indeed, the only haunt of Stevenson at this period of his career that may still be visited by pilgrims is Portsmouth Square—in which, owing to the initiative of Mr. Bruce Porter, was erected the first monument "to remember Robert Louis Stevenson" that was set up anywhere in the world.

His impressions of San Francisco were recorded in the essay entitled *A Modern Cosmopolis*, and were subsequently utilized as the basis for several chapters of *The Wrecker*. Chapter VIII of *The Wrecker*, entitled *Faces on the City Front*, details, beneath a thin disguise of fiction, the first meeting of Stevenson with the late Charles Warren Stoddard, the author of *Summer Cruising in the South Seas*, who, with the possible exception of the late Virgil Williams, the founder of the California School of Art, became his best friend in California.

Immediately after Stevenson's death, Stoddard published, in *Kate Field's Washington*, an essay in which he recorded the following impression of R. L. S.: "His was a superior organization that seems never to have been tainted by things common or unclean; one more likely to be revolted than appealed to by carnality in any form." Lest this statement, emanating from a personal friend of R. L. S., should be accepted as authoritative by posterity, it seems to me desirable, in the interest of that utter understanding that is the aim and end of criticism, to urge the reader to study thoroughly the published letters of R. L. S. himself, and to observe the following statement by Sir Sidney Colvin:

"He had not only the poet's mind but the poet's senses: in youth ginger was only too hot in his mouth, and the chimes at midnight only too favourite a music."

Stevenson did little writing in San Francisco, because his first experience of the pinch of poverty was depressing not only to his health, but also to his spirits. The manuscript of *The Amateur Emigrant*, which he had dispatched from Monterey, seemed disappointing both to Henley and to Colvin. They told him so, because they cared about his work; but their critical disapproval struck him as a blow, because it seemed to dash his hopes of ever earning his living, like many lesser writers, by a desperate plying of the pen. He protested to Colvin, in a letter sent from San Francisco, in the month of May—"The second part was written in a circle of hell unknown to Dante—that of the penniless and dying author." So complete had been his failure to support himself without assistance that he was reduced at last to a mood by no means natural to him nor characteristic of the usual

complexion of his mind—that mood of self-pity which is nearly as ignominious as the useless and unforgivable emotion of remorse. But in May, 1880, he received a telegram from his father which read, "Count on 250 pounds annually." Then his spirits rose again, and he renounced his losing fight against conditions that many lesser men have mastered.

Despite the critical disapproval of Colvin, *The Amateur Emigrant* had been set up in type, because of Stevenson's need for instant funds. It was now, at once, withheld from publication. The elder Stevenson objected to a book that would acquaint the public with the fact that an only son of parents well-to-do in Edinburgh had been required to travel half way around the world as a common emigrant. With money supplied by Thomas Stevenson, the book was bought back from the prospective publishers; and it was not ultimately issued till after the death of R. L. S. *Across the Plains* had been conceived originally as a second section of *The Amateur Emigrant;* and it was only because of the summary suppression of the first section that it was published without a prelude in 1892.

Mrs. Osbourne having secured her divorce, and Stevenson having become reconciled with his father, the two were married on May 19th, 1880. The ceremony was performed by a Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Dr. Scott, at his house on Sutter Street, near his church in Union Square. No one else was present at the wedding, except Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Virgil Williams.

Immediately after the marriage, Stevenson—who at the time was in a state of utter physical exhaustion—was taken by his wife to a deserted mining camp on the slope of Mount

Saint Helena, in the Californian Coast Range, fifty miles north from San Francisco. A detailed account of this adventure is rendered in *The Silverado Squatters*, which was subsequently written at Davos and Hyères.

Louis remained for more than two months at the Silverado mine in Calistoga; and during this time he recovered his health. His next desire was to take his wife and stepson back to Scotland. He sailed from New York on August 7th, and was met at Liverpool by his parents and Sir Sidney Colvin on August 17th. On the occasion of this transit he spent only a few hours in New York, and saw no one in these hours—not even his old friend, Mr. Will H. Low, who was secluded at the moment in Nantucket. Indeed, this occasion can scarcely be recorded, in any real sense, as a visit to New York by R. L. S.

III

Stevenson's second arrival in America was very different from his first. Instead of a nameless emigrant trundling in a baggage-wagon to a cheap lodging-house in West Street, he was now a famous personage, besieged by reporters, lionized and lauded as the author of *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island* and (most of all) the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. He had sailed from London on the S.S. *Ludgate Hill*, on August 21st, 1887, and had landed on September 7th. He remained overnight at a hotel in New York—probably the Victoria, at Broadway and Twenty-Seventh Street, though I have never been able to verify this information absolutely. The very next day, Thursday, September 8th, he was taken to Newport by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fairchild.

ON THE MAAS AT ROTTERDAM

"David and Catriona proceed 'in four hours of travel to the great city of Rotterdam.' The streets were 'pretty brightly lighted and thronged with wild-like, outlandish characters.' This description would apply to many other harbour towns—Marseilles for instance; but the local look of Rotterdam is totally different from the local look of Marseilles."—Page 117.

Those of us who love the south shore of New England are grateful for this little glimpse of it described by Louis in a letter to Sir Sidney Colvin: "A journey like fairyland for the most engaging beauties, one little rocky and pine-shaded cove after another, each with a house and a boat at anchor, so that I left my heart in each and marvelled why American authors had been so unjust to their country."

A severe cold that Louis caught upon this journey laid him low, and he was required to remain in bed throughout the fortnight of his visit to the Fairchilds. For this reason he saw nothing of Newport—a place which otherwise would surely have impressed him because of his fondness for rocky coasts and wide vistas of the sea.

It was while Stevenson was lying abed in Newport that Richard Mansfield gave his first performance in New York of Mr. T. Russell Sullivan's dramatization of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, at the Madison Square Theatre, on Monday evening, September 12th. Stevenson's wife and mother witnessed the performance from Mr. Sullivan's box. Louis himself, however, never saw the play. In this connection it may be added that, although all four of the plays that Stevenson wrote in collaboration with William Ernest Henley have been acted at one time or another, Louis never saw a performance nor even a rehearsal of any of his scenes.

On his return to New York, toward the end of September, Stevenson was introduced by his old friend, Mr. Will H. Low, to Mr. Charles Scribner and Mr. E. L. Burlingame and also to the late Augustus Saint-Gaudens, who began at this time his sketches for the famous medallion of R. L. S. Louis was now required to endure, for the first time in his

life, that humorous discomfiture that is so strangely coveted by those who never have attained it—the discomfiture of being famous. He had to hide himself from interviewers and from lion-hunters; and he was soon bewildered by enterprising publishers who were striving to outbid each other for his services. Until this time he had been unable to support himself without assistance from his father; but now, at the age of thirty-seven, he found himself discovered by America.

IV

On October 3rd, 1887, Stevenson arrived at Saranac Lake in the Adirondack Mountains; and here he remained until April 16th, 1888. The six and a half months of his residence in the Adirondacks constitute the most productive period of Stevenson's career in the United States. Before leaving New York, he had agreed with Mr. E. L. Burlingame to write a series of twelve essays, to appear month by month throughout the year in *Scribner's Magazine*. For this service he was paid $300 per number, or $3,500 for the dozen contributions: on this point I have questioned Mr. Burlingame, and he has assured me that these figures are correct. As such payments are computed nowadays, it will be noticed that Stevenson's *honorarium* amounted approximately to five cents per word. There are many, many writers in America to-day, whose names appear in no wise destined to go thundering down the ages, who are accustomed to receive a larger recompense than this. Rates have risen since 1887; and writers, as well as plumbers and ditch-diggers, are now paid in accordance with a higher scale of wages than was accepted thirty years ago. Mr. Burlingame has assured me

that his payment to R. L. S. was far in excess of the usual rate in 1887; and the Messrs. Scribner, therefore, should be pardoned for paying no more than five cents per word for an everlasting masterpiece like the essay on *The Lantern Bearers.*

To Stevenson himself the payment seemed excessive; and it was not without misgiving that, at the age of thirty-seven, he embarked upon his very first adventure in preparing copy once a month for a magazine that always had to go to press upon a certain date. To many other writers this harrowing necessity has become a second nature at the age of twenty-five; but in Stevenson's case the wonder is that he managed to confront so manfully that perennial recurrence of a dagger at the throat. Among the essays that he wrote at Saranac, to comply with the conditions of his contract, were many of the finest works of his career. *Pulvis et Umbra,* for example, which—despite the disapproval of so eminent a critic, so impressive a protestant, and so persuasive a friend as Sir Sidney Colvin—I still persist in regarding as Stevenson's greatest single piece of writing, was prepared at this time for Mr. Burlingame; and the series included also such immortal essays as *The Lantern Bearers* and *A Christmas Sermon.*

From the scenery of Saranac itself, Stevenson derived his inspiration for the final chapters of *The Master of Ballantrae.* These chapters were subsequently written at Honolulu, in accordance with his lifelong custom of describing places at a distance; but the entire tale was conceived at Saranac, under circumstances recorded in the posthumous essay on *The Genesis of the Master of Ballantrae,* and the early chapters of

the book—which dealt with his remembered Scotland—were written before he left the Adirondacks. At the same period Stevenson revised the manuscript of *The Wrong Box*, which had been drafted in entirety at Saranac by his stepson, Mr. Osbourne.

The settlement at Saranac Lake is now famous as a resort for invalids afflicted with tuberculosis. In Stevenson's time the town was less developed than it is to-day: the railway, for instance, was not carried through to Saranac till the very year when Louis was installed there. Stevenson said of the aspect of the place, in a letter to his cousin Bob, "The whole scene is very Highland, bar want of heather and the wooden houses"; and to Mr. Edmund Gosse he wrote, "We have a house in the eye of many winds, with a view of a piece of running water—Highland, all but the dear hue of peat—and of many hills—Highland also, but for the lack of heather." The justness of these two descriptions will be recognized at once by all who are equally familiar with the Scottish Highlands and the Adirondacks; and any new description of the essential aspects of the Adirondack wilderness would be superfluous to readers of *The Master of Ballantrae*.

In the Christmas season of 1911–1912, I made a special trip to Saranac Lake for the purpose of interviewing those of the inhabitants that still remembered R. L. S. Louis had lived at "Baker's"— "a house upon a hill, and very jolly in every way." "Baker's" is a wooden cottage situated at the summit of a knoll a little to the northward of the village, and offering from its veranda a wide vista of the mountains. It appeared that when the Stevensons had rented this cottage, the owner, Mrs. Baker, had not moved away, but had con-

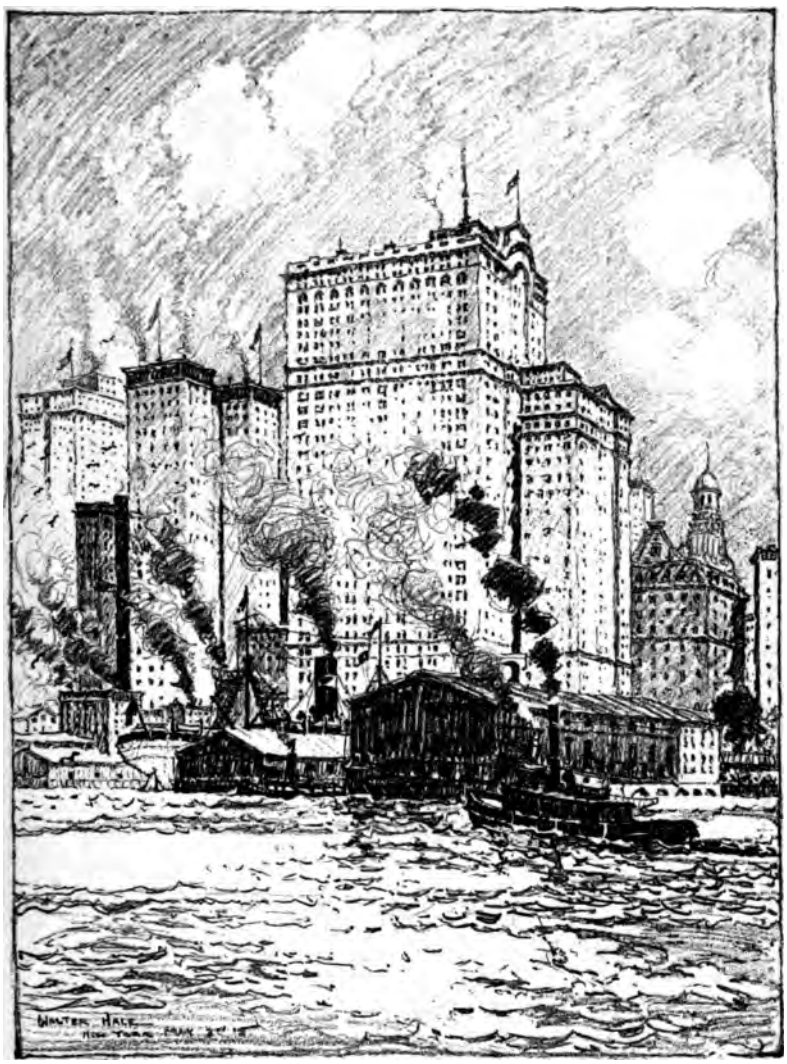
tinued to reside in a single little room under the same roof. I was therefore doubly interested in meeting Mrs. Baker, who had seen R. L. S. every day for nearly seven months at a time when he was writing many of his greatest essays. In answer to my first question concerning Stevenson's habits at this period, the worthy Mrs. Baker told me that he always smoked cigarettes in bed and burned holes in the sheets. For two hours I continued to talk in my most engaging manner, endeavouring every now and then to surprise Mrs. Baker into some other spontaneous and unconscious revelation; but, every time that I paused for a reply, she merely told me once again that Louis *would* burn holes in the sheets and that nothing could be done about it. He liked to stay in bed; he never stayed in bed without smoking cigarettes; he dropped the ashes on the sheets; the sheets were full of holes; and . . . that was all that she remembered of Robert Louis Stevenson. . . . There are many morals to this little anecdote, and he who runs may read them.

I enjoyed a very different conversation with Dr. Edward L. Trudeau, who served as Stevenson's physician throughout the winter that Louis spent at Saranac. This memorable man has lived and worked at Saranac for over forty years. He is himself afflicted with tuberculosis, and has been afflicted ever since his early twenties. In this desolate, inhospitable settlement—where the cold, dry air is favourable to consumptives—he has fought for nearly half a century against the disease that has hollowed his own cheeks and interjected a discomfortable heave and wheezing of the voice between his eager phrases. Scientifically, he is the foremost living student of tuberculosis in America. Single-

handed he has founded a City of the Sick, which sits with touching wistfulness upon a mountainside, where the stricken [like himself] recline eight hours daily in the frigid and recuperative air of out of doors. In his laboratory he has cultivated and examined the tuberculosis germ, and tested its effects on animals. For years and years he has been fighting to defeat it, toiling all the time under sentence of death from its insidious assaults.

Dr. Trudeau received me on an isolated upper veranda of his house. He was reclining in a steamer-chair—as is the custom in this community of consumptives—wrapped up in many furs and with his head swaddled in a furry cap. He is an aquiline, emaciated man, with a fine profile accentuated by deeply sculptured cheeks, a scrubby brown moustache [his hair I could not see], slender, fine, and eager hands, and a resonant, enthusiastic voice.

I had come to ask of R. L. S., and I remained to admire this hero of innumerable, unnoted battles—this maker of a City of the Sick, who, because of him, now look more hopefully on each successive rising of the sun. We talked, of course, of Louis. It became evident that during the winter that Stevenson spent at Saranac he was in what the doctor called "an arrested state" of tuberculosis. He did not suffer at that time from any active symptoms. The disease, which undoubtedly he had experienced before, no longer really troubled him. He was still physically weak, but not dangerously nor even uncomfortably ill. His state, instead of interrupting work, negatively helped it by excluding interruptions. At this point the reader may be reminded that the professional testimony of Dr. Trudeau agrees with



PRESENT APPEARANCE OF NO. 10 WEST STREET, NEW YORK, AS SEEN FROM THE HUDSON RIVER

"Nothing could be more characteristic of the transitional New York of the present time than the ridiculous contrast between the shabby and crumbling house at No. 16 West Street and the superb erection that adjoins it. . . . It is possible to imagine the astonishment of R. L. S. —if he could return to-morrow—to find himself confronted, on the site of his Reunion House, by a superb and soaring office-building, while all the rest of his remembered West Street remained as dingy and depressing as of yore."—Page 129.

the impression of Stevenson's illness that was derived by Mr. Henry James at Bournemouth.

Stevenson at Saranac was, as usual, a dare-devil—according to the report that Dr. Trudeau gave me. He did what he wanted to do, regardless of consequences. It was bad for him to smoke; but he smoked cigarettes incessantly, one after another, rolling them as he sat up in bed and puffing at them as he wrote.

Louis was, as always, active, eager, and tempestuous in conversation. A topic started, he would leap up from his chair, and, pacing the unhomely living-room of the Baker Cottage, would argue, preach, and fight, sawing the air with violent wavings of the hands. Once there was an argument concerning the respective merits of the systems of transmitting luggage on British and American railways. Dr. Trudeau reminded Stevenson that, whereas in England it was necessary that the traveller should personally superintend the transfer of his luggage at every change of cars, in America he could check his trunks through from New York to San Francisco and never think of them again. Louis, the canny and deftly dodging acrobat, took refuge in a verbal subterfuge. "Checks," he cried, "checks: an American can do nothing without them: he cannot even die without passing in his checks."

Stevenson hated illness and displayed a buoyant aversion from any serious preoccupation with disease. Dr. Trudeau could never persuade him to inspect his growing sanitarium on the mountainside. A day or two after Louis had finished *The Lantern Bearers*, Dr. Trudeau led him into his laboratory, showed him the diminutive tubercular bacillus

growing in a test tube, and talked to him about his own vast dream of defeating the disease. Louis was merely disgusted and annoyed. "Trudeau," said he, "you are carrying a lantern at your belt, but the oil has a most objectionable smell."

The doctor told me this with humour; but it did not seem to me so funny when I thought about it afterward. At present I remember an eager, active-minded man, sitting anchored in a lounging chair and muffled among furs; talking with that tense voice of the achieving dreamer; at home in life, though exiled from its laughing and delightful commonplaces; cheerful and alert, though slowly dying; young, clear-eyed, and still enthusiastic, although already ancient in endurance; lying invalided while his City of the Sick grows yearly to greater prominence among the pines; fighting with an easy smile the death that has so long besieged him, to the end that others after him, afflicted similarly, may not die. And the best of our tricky and trivial achievements in setting words together dwindle in my mind to indistinction beside the labours and the spirit of this man.

V

On April 16th, 1888, Stevenson left Saranac Lake, considerably helped in health, and returned to New York City. His presence in the metropolis was confided to only a few people; and much of his time was spent in bed, not because of illness, but merely because this habit contributed to his seclusion. Saint-Gaudens, moreover, was sketching him in bed for the medallion.

At this time Louis lived for two weeks at the Hotel St.

Stephen's, in East Eleventh Street, near University Place. This hotel was not unnoted in its day; it was, for instance, the residing-place of Mrs. Jefferson Davis for several years after the Civil War. After Stevenson's time it became incorporated with the Hotel Albert, which stands immediately adjacent to it at the corner of University Place. At a still later period the building of the Hotel St. Stephen's was abandoned. It is still standing; but it has been vacant for several years, and its deserted and decadent aspect is of little interest to the literary pilgrim. No one now resident at the Hotel Albert was there in 1888, and no record of Stevenson's stay has been retained in the archives of the office.

I have talked with several people who called upon R. L. S. at the Hotel St. Stephen's. Mr. John S. Phillips and Mr. Oliver Herford have both transmitted the impression of a certain incongruity between his habit of sitting up in bed and the energy and vigour of his personality. Louis spent nearly an entire afternoon on a bench in Washington Square conversing with Mark Twain; and New Yorkers who desire to trace his very footsteps may also be informed, on the authority of Mr. Herford, that Stevenson frequented the old Café Martin at the corner of University Place and Ninth Street.

VI

At the beginning of May [the exact date, according to his mother's diary, was April 30th], Stevenson went to Manasquan, New Jersey, a resort that had been recommended to him by Mr. Will H. Low. Here he remained for a month, until a telegram from San Francisco told him that his wife, who was visiting in California, had discovered that the

schooner-yacht *Casco* might be hired for a cruise in the Pacific. Mr. Low was with him when the telegram arrived. "What will you do?" was his query; and the answer came at once, "Go, of course."

The Manasquan River, as it approaches the sea, broadens out to a lagoon which separates Manasquan itself from Point Pleasant. Beside the river, nearly two miles inland from the dunes that hedge the ocean, was situated the Union House where Louis lived. The Stevenson family had the place entirely to themselves, because the regular season for summer boarders did not begin till June. Louis took many long walks, and enjoyed sailing in a catboat navigated by his stepson. It was at Manasquan that Saint-Gaudens modelled the hands for his medallion; and Mr. Low, who saw a great deal of Louis at this period, has recorded several conversations at Manasquan in a charming chapter of his *Chronicle of Friendships*.

Till very lately, visitors to Manasquan were shown the room on the second story of the Union House which was Stevenson's final residence "in our part of the country." Recently, however, this old-fashioned, quiet, quaint hotel was almost entirely destroyed by fire, and America lost one of her few remaining landmarks associated intimately with the life of R. L. S.

VII

Stevenson returned to New York on May 28th and arrived in San Francisco on June 7th. He remained at the Occidental Hotel in Montgomery Street—which was destroyed in the conflagration that resulted from the great earth-

quake of 1906—until the *Casco* was fitted out for her cruise. The contemplated trip among the South Sea Islands had been financed by Mr. S. S. McClure, who was able to offer Stevenson the sum of ten thousand dollars for a series of travel letters to be published in a syndicate of newspapers. Louis was so impressed by the enterprise and by the personality of Mr. McClure that he later used him as a model for the character of Jim Pinkerton in *The Wrecker*.

The *Casco* was towed outside the harbour of San Francisco in the early hours of June 28th, 1888. Little did any one imagine at the time that Louis was destined never to set foot again in Europe or America. It was a long trail from the Golden Gate to the summit of Vaea Mountain.

This trail I have not followed. I cannot lead the reader "up the Road of Loving Hearts, 'on a wonderful clear night of stars,' to meet the man coming toward us on a horse." In the diary of every traveller, the best-belovèd places are those that are still to seek. But it is good to remember always that Vailima is only half the world away, and that some day we may see the Isle of Upolu arising from the sea. As Louis said in *El Dorado*, "There is always a new horizon for onward-looking men; and although we dwell on a small planet, immersed in petty business and not enduring beyond a brief period of years, we are so constituted that . . . the term of hoping is prolonged until the term of life."

THE END

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